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# STUDIES

IN  
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

Italian Jesuits in Maryland

*A Clash of Theological Cultures*

GERALD L. MCKEVITT, S.J.

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ITALIAN JESUITS IN MARYLAND  
*A Clash of Theological Cultures*

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Gerald L. McKevitt, S.J.

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS  
39/1 · SPRING 2007

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## *The first word . . .*

Why is it our elders took such great fascination in recalling exactly where they were when the news of Pearl Harbor first came over the radio? It's really an odd topic of conversation, but it came up often. Perhaps my own point of view was a bit skewed, since at the time I was too busy pushing soggy animal crackers into my face to pay much attention to news bulletins on the radio. I wonder if psychologists have a term like "geographic memory."

In the natural flow of time, we all become elders and invariably geographic memory keeps popping through the surface, overpowering other accidentals of long-past experiences. I was standing at the top of the red-brick stoop of our family's semi-attached house, holding my mother's hand, when Francine Hayman, pigtails to the breeze, came screeching down the middle of the street, looking like a child Barbra Streisand and sounding like an amphetamine-crazed Cassandra. In the best Hebraio-Hibernian tradition of taking delight in sharing bad news, she proclaimed that President Roosevelt was dead. A few weeks later, I was sitting in the back of my first-grade classroom, when one of those horrid "perfect little girls" from the third grade interrupted class, passed a note to sister, and then after a whispered exchange announced to the class that it was V-E Day. I didn't know what V-E Day meant, but sister sent us all home to celebrate. History I forget; holidays I remember.

As a first-year regent I was chatting on a staircase at Xavier High School between classes when a senior from my Greek class told me that President Kennedy had been shot. At the time, sadist jokes were the staple of high-school wits, and I waited for some sick punch line to a joke that never came. More recently, I stopped off for a cup of coffee at St. Mary's at Boston College between my nine o'clock class and office hours. It was a glorious September morning in New England, and I couldn't understand why everyone looked so glum. I stood by the sink while they muttered something about planes and the World Trade Center in New York.

Most of you have no doubt already matched your recollections with mine. But here's a bit of nostalgic geography that's a bit idiosyncratic. I'd just entered the periodical room at America House late one afternoon in 1973 when another young associate editor looked up from his magazine and told me that Woodstock had been closed. No, of course, that decision does not rank in importance with those other events, not by a long shot, but it did hit close to home as a kind of personal trauma. I can still recon-

struct a composition of place for that conversation as though it took place just yesterday.

The America community then included several Woodstock alumni. When we gathered later that evening, amazement rather than anger seemed to set the tone. As the weeks passed, disbelief turned to sadness. It was like the sudden death of a loved one. How could the American provincials have reached this conclusion? How could Father Arrupe have been persuaded to go along? Over the few years that separated the events, I had become reconciled to the closing of my beloved Brooklyn Prep, and had even come to appreciate the wisdom and courage of the policy. But Woodstock was something else. It was a special place, the very antithesis of the medieval Kingdom of Two Sicilies described by Jerry McKevitt in this issue of *STUDIES*, and yet it was subject to yet another clash of cultures that eventually led to its implosion.

Why was it special for those of us who closed the seminary in Maryland and prepared for the move to Manhattan? Consider the context. Most of the freshman class of 1966 had been exposed to philosophy on another hilltop, this one barren rather than wooded, in Westchester County, fifty miles and several centuries removed from New York City. Culturally, this was very close to the Woodstock that Jerry describes in his article, from its Neo-Thomism to its dehumanizing daily order. After regency in the major cities of the East Coast, most of us feared more of the same when we returned to studies. The scattered children of Israel gathered from various summer projects for a few days' villa at Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania, than which nothing remoter could be conceived.

The buses to Woodstock passed through the undulating farm country of central Maryland, rattled over the plank bridge across the Patapsco, and finally glided around the front of the College, where Black Angus chomped meditatively on the lawn. Someone explained that these were the faculty at lunch. The building was imposing, ominous; the rooms under the roof small and Spartan, the heat oppressive. Here we were to enjoy the cultural life of the twin cities of Granite and Daniel, suburbs of greater metropolitan Woodstock. To say we were depressed would ascribe a level of hilarity to the moment that it did not deserve. We were back in the nineteenth-century manor house.

First impressions can be desperately deceiving, and in this case they certainly were. On the first day, a note went up telling us that because of the heat, the summer dress code would continue, and when we finally settled into regular order, those new-fangled clerical shirts would be considered an acceptable alternative to habits. By second year, informal dress continued through the year, the meals were all served buffet style. The rigidities of seminary life, as we recalled them from earlier experiences, were gone. We had a far-sighted rector and a considerate, generous minister who treated us like the adults we were.



The intellectual life was exhilarating for all but those few determined not to let studies interfere with their outside interests, like chopping trees, sports, and getting arrested. Recall that the old course of studies fragmented our training to a fault, with the result that almost all of us began theology with little more than high-school catechism for background. Although Gus Weigel had passed from the scene some years earlier and John Courtney Murray (so named to distinguish him from his classmate John Clayton Murray—would someone from Queens named Jack Murray have been taken seriously at the Council?) was in his final year of teaching, but the veteran faculty had been supplemented by several fine, younger scholars, many of whom had their degrees from institutions other than the Gregorian. Vatican II ended during regency and the Church was busy trying to digest its teachings. We had electives and seminars rather than the mandated lectures of long course and short course. It was an exciting time to do theology, and Woodstock provided what seemed to be an ideal mix of people to carry it off.

In the post-Sputnik era, the American Society rushed many of its brightest men into the sciences during their regency, and as a result we had more Ph.D.'s among the student body than on the faculty, many of whom were able to continue their research in the Washington-Baltimore area. We had *Woodstock Letters* and *Theological Studies*, and what was reputed to be one of the best theological libraries in the country. Those of us who were committed to "peculiar disciplines," as they were once quaintly named, were encouraged to study, teach, and publish, in the belief that serious intellectual work in any area would complement our theological reflection rather than compromise it.

Yes, Jerry is correct in describing the campus as remote, but the Jones Falls Expressway made Baltimore a mere half-hour away. I don't think we had the *studium aut suicidium* sense of isolation that he ascribes to earlier generations. Many took up urban ministries in Baltimore, and others commuted to Washington to join in the many political-action coalitions active around the federal agencies. Interest in the civil-rights and peace movements peaked during those years. A commuter bus stopped at the front door several times a day. We had a reasonable fleet of cars available to the scholastics, and several organizations that depended on our help provided transportation. For the first time in its history, it was alleged, Woodstock had a parking problem. The campus golf course became a field of weeds, since so few duffers were around to use it or care for it.

Even though we did not inhabit the intellectual bubble that Jerry describes, we still knew that the rural seminary was not the perfect instrument to train priests for the postghetto, postconciliar Church. While transportation and flexible scheduling could compensate for many of the limits of isolation, it could not provide the ecumenical dimension to our training that was clearly necessary in America's pluralistic society. As did

all the other theologates, Woodstock concluded that after a century on the Patapsco, it was time to move. It entered into conversations with Yale Divinity School and Union Theological, and in the end opted for New York. Doing theology in conjunction with Union and Jewish Theological, and in the shadow of the World Council of Churches and Columbia University, seemed an ideal opportunity for young Jesuits, but we'll never know. The ship sank during its shakedown cruise. Or rather was decommissioned and scuttled.

What happened? I don't know and was certainly not privy to the decision-making process. A lot of people seemed nervous about the very idea of New York. One heard the warning, "You can't do theology on Broadway," an assertion that would surely have come as a surprise to Tillich, the Niebuhrs, Bonhoeffer, and Heschel. The other theologates provided private houses in leafy residential neighborhoods, but given the nature of real estate in Manhattan, the best Woodstock could offer were clusters of apartments. The dispersion led to a sense of a lack of control, a notion that gained traction with Garry Wills's unfortunate article in *New York* magazine. For whatever reasons, the school with the longest history, the most promising ecumenical setting, and strongest faculty closed. It seemed unreasonable, unfair, and just sad that the American Jesuits backed away from a golden opportunity. At least that is the way I saw it at the time. Well, all right, maybe I still do.

Just as Woodstock began packing its library off to Georgetown, I started a tour of duty in formation work, and had the opportunity to visit not only the remnant community at Woodstock, but the other schools of theology in the United States and Canada. As a result, some of the mystery about Woodstock's closing was lifted. At least I thought I gained an insight into the rationale behind the decision. Just five years out of theology at this time, I was amazed at the contrast from my own experience. Rectors and deans spoke of designing programs to strengthen the personal and pastoral skills of individual scholastics. Spiritual direction and personally directed retreats had become important elements in the course of studies. During his interview with the rep from the home office, one scholastic complained about having to spend the summer doing CPE. He was amazed that I had never heard of the term. Community meetings and mutual scrutiny seemed as important as systematic theology. It was a bit overly introspective for my taste, but after all, I was the product of another place and time.

Despite Garry Wills's caricature, we'll probably all go to our graves wondering if the cultural, political, and religious turbulence of the period were any worse at Woodstock than at the other houses of studies. Yet I've reached my own conclusion that Woodstock marched to its own drummer, only to realize that the parade had passed it by. It tried to immerse itself academically and socially into the "American Experience," to borrow a

phrase used so often by Father Murray. While the other theologates constructed enclaves within other people's academic enclaves, Woodstock assimilated with the natives, perhaps to an excessive degree. At least in the estimation of many others, it both lost control of its environment in an unhealthy way and neglected important ecclesial dimensions of priestly formation. We'll also wonder if Woodstock should have been given the opportunity to strengthen its perceived weaknesses, or whether it could have, given its own culture. Of course, at this point history has resolved the issue.

Jerry McKevitt has given us the portrait of Woodstock College in conflict in another era, but one marked by controversies every bit as divisive as the ones it faced in more recent times. My three years on the Patapsco provided a wonderful experience. While I have become reconciled to its demise, more or less, I can only be grateful that it survived the first clash of cultures. Jerry's essay gives all of us an opportunity to reflect on our own theological training, and on the training the Society will need for the contemporary Church.

*Richard A. Blake, S.J.*  
Editor





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## Author's Preamble

This present monograph develops a portion of the story of the role of the Italian Jesuits in invigorating the ministries of the Maryland Province, especially their influence in the founding of Woodstock College. The fuller version is recounted in *Brokers of Culture: Italian Jesuits in the American West, 1848-1919*, by Gerald McKevitt (© 2007 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Jr. University), recently published by the Stanford University Press, [www.sup.org](http://www.sup.org).

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Gerald L. McKevitt, S.J., currently serves as the Ignacio Ellucuria, S.J., professor of Jesuit Studies at Santa Clara University in California. After completing his doctorate in history at UCLA and theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, he began teaching courses on Native American history and the American West. In addition to *Brokers of Culture*, he has published *Santa Clara University: A History, 1851-1977*. He has also taught at Fordham University and Gonzaga University and was a founding member of the editorial board of *Conversations*.

# ITALIAN JESUITS IN MARYLAND

## *A Clash of Theological Cultures*

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*Political unrest in Europe during the nineteenth century led to a resettlement of many Italian Jesuits in the rapidly developing regions of the United States. Despite obvious problems with adaptation, their contribution to the maturing of the American Church was invaluable. Their founding of Woodstock College was crucial to raising the educational standards for the American clergy.*

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### I. A Transformation of Ministries

In 1885 Domenico Pantanella, the Neapolitan president of the College of the Sacred Heart (today's Regis University), described his fledgling Colorado institution to friends abroad. The faculty were a jumble of nationalities, he remarked. "Two Frenchmen, an Italian, two American scholastics, one Irish brother, two Mexican brothers, one German novice. One never knows what language to speak!"<sup>1</sup>

Pantanella's jest underscored a hallmark of the Society of Jesus in nineteenth-century America: it was dominated by Europeans. American- and English-born Jesuits staffed early Georgetown College and establishments throughout the Maryland Province, but most apostolates were forged by a Noah's Ark of refugees. Saint Louis University was run by Belgian missionaries; exiled French Jesuits

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<sup>1</sup> Pantanella (Morrison, Col.) to Canger, Jan. 28, 1885, Archives of the Naples Province of the Society of Jesus (Archivio della Provincia Neapolitana della Compagnia del Gesù), Gesù Nuovo, Naples, Italy (hereafter abbreviated to ANPSJ). Before transferring to Colorado, Regis had operated since 1877 in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

opened churches and colleges in Alabama, Kentucky, and New York; and Germans deported by Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* founded schools and parishes across the northeast, from upper New York to the Mississippi River. Italian Jesuits animated the Society's apostolates nationwide, first in the East, and then in the Far West, where they ministered to multiethnic congregations scattered across eleven states.

What effect did this national, cultural, and linguistic diversity pose for the Society of Jesus? We catch a small glimpse by studying the entrance of Italian Jesuits into the Maryland Province at mid-century. This episode is instructive because it reveals some of the challenges and the opportunities that engaged the Society not only in the nineteenth century but also in our own day. The Italians'

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*"Thanks be to God and Garibaldi," exclaimed Joseph Keller, the provincial of the Maryland Province, grateful that the Italians had made America their destination. Their arrival strengthened both the Church and the Jesuit order at a crucial time when priests were badly needed.*

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flight from persecution in Europe benefited both the Catholic Church and the Society in this country. Just as clergy from the Third World provide aid to the contemporary Church in the United States and in Europe, so too the inpouring of refugee Jesuits sustained the mushroom growth of American Catholicism in the nineteenth century, when priests were in short supply. It is instructive, in our own era of shrinking manpower, to consider how the Society of an earlier time coped with personnel shortages. Jesuits

of the restored order, for example, not only welcomed refugees from abroad, they aggressively recruited them for ministry in America. As a consequence, polyglot expatriates engaged in a wide range of apostolates to American Catholics and to fellow immigrants pouring into the United States from every corner of the globe, as they founded parishes, high schools, and colleges that still flourish today.

These achievements, however, were not accomplished without conflict. Then as now, Jesuits from abroad found religious life in America both attractive and alienating. What was alien they sought to reform. The refugees from Italy, molded by the traditions of their homeland, labored to integrate provincial America into a Catholic



culture that transcended local and national boundaries. Wherever they went, the Church was more Roman when they left. For instance, they reshaped Jesuit formation in the Maryland Province according to a European prototype. As agents of ecclesiastical standardization, the émigrés upgraded the quality of the Society's training in the United States by founding the order's first national scholasticate, Woodstock College. Thus, not only did they transfer the formation of young Jesuits from college campuses to a rural location, but they also promoted a devotional life centered on Rome and the papacy, and they standardized philosophical and theological instruction in accord with the doctrines of St. Thomas Aquinas. These innovations provoked clashes between American Jesuits and their European confreres over how the Society's ministry should be exercised in the United States. Despite disagreements, that tension proved ultimately to be lifegiving, however, because it bore fruit in greater apostolic effectiveness.

Among the many uprooted Europeans of the nineteenth century, few exercised a more wide-ranging influence on the American Society than did the Italians. Ejected from their homeland by the upheavals that accompanied the process of national unification known as the *Risorgimento* (Rebirth), nearly four hundred expatriates assumed crucial ministries across the United States. After revolution temporarily drove Pope Pius IX and religious orders from Rome in 1848, Italian Jesuits crossed the Atlantic to start new apostolates on the East Coast. After the kingdom of Piedmont began expelling clergy, members of the northerly Turin Province launched missionary work in the Far West, founding colleges, churches, and Indian missions in California and in the Pacific Northwest. With the fall of the Papal States to the armies of united Italy in 1870, émigrés from the Neapolitan Province ministered to Spanish-speaking Catholics in the New Mexico–Colorado Mission. The capstone of Neapolitan Jesuit influence was the founding in 1869 of Woodstock College, a national seminary in Maryland. A few years

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*No institution profited as much from the refugee influx than Georgetown College, which had relied on recruits from abroad since its founding in 1789. With the advent of the erudite émigrés, scholarship flourished.*

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later, they established a school for Hispanic Catholics in Las Vegas, New Mexico, which was later relocated in Denver as Regis College.

The entry of Italian Jesuits into the American Catholic fold enkindled both celebration and conflict within the Society. Stepping ashore, the refugees were greeted enthusiastically by their fellow religious, beginning with the first wave in 1848 and continuing into succeeding decades. "Thanks be to God and Garibaldi," exclaimed Joseph Keller, the provincial of the Maryland Province, grateful that the Italians had made America their destination.<sup>2</sup> Their arrival strengthened both the Church and the Jesuit order at a crucial time when priests were badly needed. The Maryland Province, which at the time embraced the District of Columbia and the states of Maryland, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, boasted a total membership of 140 men. Of these, 37 were scholastics, 59 were brothers, and only 44 were priests. This small coterie staffed seventeen institutions, including three colleges.<sup>3</sup>

In such a restricted milieu, every man counted. Consequently, although the Europeans' vision of how the Church and the Society of Jesus should operate would later provoke confrontation, the initial reaction to the advent of the immigrant clerics was optimistic if not euphoric. It also mattered that they were foreigners. The high esteem in which local Catholics held the Europeans and the benefits they were expected to bring to the Church were summarized by John Larkin, the president of St. John's College at Fordham, New York. The outsiders would supply a welcome corrective to American provincialism, he predicted in 1848. The present state of the persecuted Society of Jesus in Europe was "a very painful one, . . . but many advantages will accrue from it." Contact with Jesuits from abroad would have a broadening effect on the order in America, Larkin believed.

The different provinces will be acquainted with one another, learn to appreciate what is good and solid, [and] local prejudice will be done away with. The ideas of many, confined within too narrow a circle,

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Keller (Baltimore) to Davide Palomba, Sept. 30, 1873, ANPSJ.

<sup>3</sup> *Catalogus Provinciæ Marylandiæ, 1848*, Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu), Borgo Santo Spirito 5, Rome, Italy (hereafter abbreviated to ARSJ).



will be enlarged. They will learn there are more ways of doing a thing, and doing it well.<sup>4</sup>

Before Larkin's rosy forecast could be realized, work had to be found for the new arrivals, confidence to egos shattered by exile had to be restored, and a place for them in the new society had to be found. Most of them found jobs at Jesuit colleges. Reliance on Latin as the language of instruction in philosophy and theology courses, eased their switch from one culture to another. No institution profited as much from the refugee influx as did Georgetown College, which had relied on recruits from abroad since its founding in 1789. With the advent of the erudite émigrés, scholarship flourished. Two of the brightest lights among the Roman exiles were the astronomers Benedetto Sestini and Pietro Angelo Secchi, both of whom resumed their research work in the college observatory. Although Secchi lingered in America for only a short time, Sestini, who brought recognition to the college through a series of widely used mathematics textbooks, reigned for years as the school's top research scientist.<sup>5</sup>

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*The College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts reported that philosophy students were "well pleased with Father Felice Sopranis," former rector of the Roman College, who had surmounted his ignorance of English by lecturing in Latin.*

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These reinforcements, joined with Jesuits from Switzerland, inflated the Georgetown faculty from sixteen to twenty-two professors in the space of three years. Classes in German and Hebrew suddenly made their debut, while chemistry and physics began to be offered every year. Advances in the curriculum, accompanied by a jump in the size of the student body, sparked an upswing in the fortunes of the growing institution whose enrollment spiraled from a trifling 136

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<sup>4</sup>John Larkin (New York) to F. W. Gockeln, July 10, 1848, Larkin Correspondence, Archives of the New York Province of the Society of Jesus, Fordham University, New York (hereafter abbreviated to ANYPSJ).

<sup>5</sup>Robert Emmett Curran, *Georgetown University, Volume 1: From Academy to University, 1789–1889* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Univ. Press, 1993), 1:143; Joseph T. Durkin, *Georgetown University: First in the Nation's Capital* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), 27.

pupils in 1849 to over 300 a decade later. This burst of progress prompted the college to publish a printed catalog during the 1850–51 academic year. "For the first time," wrote the university historian, Joseph T. Durkin, "the detailed blueprint of the studies provided at Georgetown was presented to the public in a readable and attractive form."<sup>6</sup>

All Jesuit schools on the East Coast profited from the coming of the displaced academics. The College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts reported that philosophy students were "well pleased with Father Felice Sopranis," former rector of the Roman College, who

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*In preferring the freedom of parish life to the regimen of an academic career, the Italians were not alone. American Jesuits had a long tradition of running rural churches, a tradition they were reluctant to let go.*

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had surmounted his ignorance of English by lecturing in Latin.<sup>7</sup> The Italian philosopher-theologian Nicola Russo became the first published professor at Boston College. A leader in the revival of Thomism in the United States, Russo authored a two-volume *Summa philosophica iuxta scholasticorum principia* that was adopted as a text in many American seminaries. Eventually, twenty-one of the Italians became presidents of American colleges, most of them in the

Far West. Russo served as the seventh president of Boston College, and Antonio Ciampi, praised by American contemporaries as "one of the brilliant and most popular" of the Italians, completed three terms at the College of the Holy Cross and another at Baltimore's Loyola College.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Curran, *Georgetown University*, 1:133, 397f.; "Catalogues [of Georgetown College], 1835–36 to 1849–50, incl.," Archives of Georgetown University and Catholic Historical Manuscripts Collection, University Library, Special Collections Division, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. (hereafter abbreviated to AGU); Joseph Havens Richards, S.J., "An Explanation in Reply to Some Recent Strictures," *Woodstock Letters* (hereafter abbreviated to WL) 26 (1897): 153.

<sup>7</sup>Early (Worcester, Mass.) to Brocard, Jan. 15, 1849, "Maryland Letters 1810s–50s," ANYPSJ.

<sup>8</sup>Barnum, [Statement regarding Ciampi Papers, n.d.], A. Ciampi Papers, Catholic Historical Manuscript Collection, AGU; Ciampi's role at Holy Cross is described in Anthony J. Kuzniewski, *Thy Honored Name: A History of the College of the*



Several of the exiles who emigrated at an early age were particularly adept at hitching their star to a new culture. As president of Loyola College, an accommodating Ciampi scrapped practices deemed unsuited for American students (daily recitation of the rosary), while championing others that some churchmen opposed (dancing the waltz). In an era when Catholics and Protestants vied in insulting one another, Ciampi was ecumenical, encouraging, for example, one of his female converts to accompany her non-Catholic husband to his church "for the sake of association and to hear the eloquence of the preacher."<sup>9</sup> Luigi Varsi's swift acculturation evoked praise from Americans too. His scientific lectures in Boston, "delivered in an interesting style and illustrated with costly apparatus procured at his desire," were, they said, "perhaps the best until then given on those subjects in the province."<sup>10</sup>

## The Pastoral Imperative

So many exiles rushed off to pastoral work, however, that the Maryland provincial, Angelo Paresce, carped that they were abandoning the classroom for the pulpit. "They barely begin to babble a bit of English," he grumbled, "and they become attracted to ministries and want nothing more to do with teaching." In preferring the freedom of parish life to the regimen of an academic career, the Italians were not alone. American Jesuits had a long tradition of running rural churches, a tradition they were reluctant to let go.<sup>11</sup>

In the seventeenth century, circuit-riding priests had established a network of missions in Maryland's rural counties. Driven by a desire to succeed and to win acceptance in British North America, Jesuits had financed their apostolates through farms that were supported by a slave work force. Their eight plantations, the center of Catholic religious life in colonial Maryland, gradually morphed into parishes. Although reliance on slave labor had ended in 1838, the planter-priests continued to say Mass, till their fields, and run

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*Holy Cross, 1843–1994* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup>Nicholas Varga, *Baltimore's Loyola, Loyola's Baltimore, 1851–1986* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1990), 71.

<sup>10</sup>John J. Ryan, S.J., "Our Scholasticate: An Account of Its Growth and History to the Opening of Woodstock, 1805–1869," WL 33 (1904): 141.

<sup>11</sup>Paresce (Baltimore) to Beckx, Jan. 12, 1869, Marylandia 1010-I-33, ARSI.



farms far into the nineteenth century. From Georgetown College, Jesuits also cared for congregations in coastal Virginia while pastors from St. Mary's Parish in Alexandria fanned out to rural missions in eastern portions of the state. Similar networks developed in Pennsylvania and Maine, where by midcentury the Jesuits ran eight churches and thirty-three mission stations.<sup>12</sup> Although the Americans' penchant for country parishes would soon emerge as a point of contention between native and foreign Jesuits, that ministry was temporarily beefed up by the arrival of priests from abroad. Most of the refugee clergy, however, were drawn to ethnically diverse urban churches because of their fluency in multiple languages.

So dependent had the Americans become on their European brethren that the return of some Italians to Rome following the 1849 papal restoration plunged Georgetown College into crisis. You "can judge what difficulty this recall puts us in," Maryland's head, Ignace Brocard, protested when the Jesuit provincial of Rome began retriev-

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ing his men. "We will do all we can to carry out his orders," Brocard said in letters brimming with frustration, "but to send back *all* of his priests and scholastics will be impossible for us." Brocard lobbied the superior general's intervention, insisting that experienced European hands were indispensable for

laying a solid foundation for the reestablished Society in the United States. Felice Sopranis, for example, had become "indispensable for the tertianship," a training program for newly ordained priests. And it was "absolutely essential" that the mathematician Giovanni Battista Pianciani remain in America "until other help arrives."<sup>13</sup>

Brandishing every weapon in his meager arsenal, Brocard claimed that the well-being of Georgetown had global implications. The school was providing an English tutor for the son of the French

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<sup>12</sup>Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1985), 79–82, 87–90; Vincent A. Lapomarda, *The Jesuit Heritage of New England* (Worcester: Holy Cross, 1977), 18. Regarding Jesuit slavery, see Thomas Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717–1838* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 187 f., 216–19.

<sup>13</sup>Brocard (Georgetown) to Roothaan, Apr. 12, 1850, Marylandia 1008-II-24, ARSI.

ambassador, he wrote. "We also have very good relations with the ambassadors of Russia, Mexico, Chile, New Grenada." If diminished manpower forced the Jesuits to abandon the care of these notables, he hinted darkly, the reputation of the Society in the diplomats' home countries might suffer. Others, too, joined the chorus of protest. When Rome sought to reclaim the astronomer Benedetto Sestini, James A. Ward, of St. Joseph's College in Philadelphia, howled, "What on earth are we to do, if the very person taken away is one for whom we can find no substitute?" Sestini and his countrymen had to stay put "so that our College may stay afloat." Besides, he noted, "we have freely spent nearly twenty thousand dollars" caring for them.<sup>14</sup>

Some Italians were themselves dismayed at the prospect of leaving. Charmed by what they had discovered in America and skittish about turbulent Italy, they sought to linger. An anxious Giovanni Battista Pianciani voiced "extreme repugnance" at the prospect of a hasty return to Rome. In a letter to the superior general, he whispered news that "I have told no one here." One of his brothers, a man once very dedicated to the pope, had enlisted in the nationalist movement. In addition, he learned from French newspapers that another relative had joined the resistance, fought against the papal restoration, and now languished in prison. Expecting any day to hear that one of his kin had been executed by a firing squad, the mortified Pianciani dreaded repatriation. A month later, however, he did a sudden about-face. The tabloids upon which he relied for intelligence about his relatives

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*Reports sent by them to Jan Roothaan (whom many refugees knew personally) and to his successor, Pieter Beckx, detailed dark impressions of America. Their accounts colored the superior general's view of Jesuit life and shaped his decisions regarding the order's activities there.*

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<sup>14</sup>Brocard (Georgetown) to Roothaan, Sept. 17, 1849, Marylandia 1008-II-16; Ward (Baltimore) to Beckx, Nov. 17, 1854, Marylandia 1008-III-9, both in ARSI.



had exaggerated their plight, and so, with *l'onore di famiglia* restored, he announced a cheery willingness to sail home.<sup>15</sup>

Other exiles, doubting the stability of Italy's new government, preferred to pitch their tent in America. Ignazio Ciampi, a twenty-two-year-old scholastic, volunteered to stay put in order to convert the country's "immense number of Protestants of every denomination." Exile had likewise fired Benedetto Sestini's sense of mission. Distressed by the unconventionality of American Catholicism, this watchdog of orthodoxy announced himself ready to spend the rest of his life in the United States in hopes of setting things aright.<sup>16</sup>

## A Second Wave

But the majority of the fugitives of 1848 soon repatriated across the Atlantic. By 1854 the number of Italians in the Maryland Province dropped from thirty-two to a mere half dozen.<sup>17</sup> The vacancy created by the departing Romans was soon filled, however, with a fresh wave of asylum seekers. When the northerly Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia started ejecting clergy in the 1850s, Jesuits arrived in even larger numbers. Unlike the Romans, for whom the doors of Italy had (briefly) reopened, the Piedmontese found themselves permanent exiles. A few years later, after southern Italy became absorbed into the newly unified secular state, scores of deported Neapolitan Jesuits also made the United States their home. Although both the *Piemontesi* and the *Neapolitani* would soon establish missions in the Far West, in the interval between deportation and re-emigration to the frontier, they, like their Roman predecessors, left their mark on the Jesuit world of the East Coast.

How did the immigrants regard their adopted home? Not every exile was as uncritical of the United States as Francesco De Vico, whom Roothaan once accused of looking at the United States

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<sup>15</sup> Pianciani (Georgetown) to Roothaan, n.d., Sept. 1849, Marylandia 1009-XIV-11; and Pianciani (Georgetown) to Roothaan, Oct. 4, 1849, Marylandia 1009-XIV-14, both in ARSI.

<sup>16</sup> Brocard (Georgetown) to Roothaan, Apr. 12, 1850, Marylandia 1008-II-24; Ignazio Ciampi (Georgetown) to Roothaan, Feb. 18, 1850, Marylandia 1009-XIV-16; Benedetto Sestini (Georgetown) to Roothaan, Sept. 17, 1849, Marylandia 1009-XIV-12, all in ARSI.

<sup>17</sup> *Catalogus Provinciæ Marylandiæ*, 1846 and following years, ARSI.

through rose-colored glasses. Others, by-the-book traditionalists who cringed at the American lifestyle, soon made their presence felt. Dismayed by what they encountered, the émigrés exerted a corrective influence on Jesuit culture that was disproportionate both to their numbers and to the length of their stay in the country. Reports sent by them to Jan Roothaan (whom many refugees knew personally) and to his successor, Pieter Beckx, detailed dark impressions of America. Their accounts colored the superior general's view of Jesuit life and shaped his decisions regarding the order's activities there.

The immigrants' *mal de terre* was ascribable in part to the inevitable disruptions that afflicted exiles. But their critique also exposed a conviction that religious life in Italy shone as a paradigm for the rest of the world. Since the sixteenth century, the Roman houses had been viewed as the embodiment of Jesuit tradition and the gold standard against which all other institutions were measured. St. Ignatius had spent most of his career in the city, and many of the order's first establishments, including its headquarters at the Gesù, flourished there. Seminarians from around the world came to receive their formation at the *Collegio Romano*, "that great and blessed Roman nursery," as contemporary churchmen lauded it. From that "great generator of men" was launched a phalanx of priests ready to "overrun and conquer the wicked world."<sup>18</sup> Belief in

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the normative stature of the Eternal City spread like ripples from a tossed stone throughout the Catholic world during the centralizing papacy of Pius IX. Accordingly, American Jesuits had for years sent their most promising seminarians to Rome to drink in the spirit of the Society at its fountainhead. For this reason James Ryder, later president of Georgetown College, and other Maryland scholastics had been dispatched to Italy for training in the 1820s. Similar benefits were expected to flow in reverse when the Roman College exiles of 1848 arrived in the United States. "Shaking off the dust of their

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<sup>18</sup> Sixteenth-century Jesuit praises of Rome are found in A. Lynn Martin, *The Jesuit Mind: The Mentality of an Elite in Early Modern France* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1988), 19.



feet upon the continent of Europe," an American priest said, the faculty of the *Collegio* will "work as no other body in the church can work for converting this country to the Faith."<sup>19</sup>

In a short time, however, both native-born and immigrant Jesuits began to reevaluate the advantages of compounding cultures. The hosts found themselves outnumbered by their guests, as at Georgetown College, where by 1849 nearly 70 percent of personnel were Europeans, expatriates not only from Italy, but from France and Switzerland as well.<sup>20</sup> That the immigrants did not instantly shed foreign customs and embrace the American way of life rankled

local Jesuits. "When will they learn to lay aside their notions," griped a New York priest, "and take up the ways and customs and languages of those whom they live with?"<sup>21</sup>

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*When hostility turned violent, Charles Stonestreet, Jesuit provincial of Maryland during the years 1852 to 1858, forbade his subjects to wear clerical garb in public.*

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For their part, refugees found Americans clueless about Jesuit tradition and unfailingly convinced of the superiority of their way of doing things. "I no-

ticed various little things that cause me some concern for the future," Ignace Brocard wrote in 1849, soon after the first Roman castaways settled into Georgetown. The conventions to which our Italian guests are accustomed, he sighed, "will require some adjusting." Thus, as Europeans and Americans became better acquainted, lofty first impressions yielded to more critical reappraisals and finally, in some cases, to mutual incomprehension.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> J. B. Shaw (Boston) to Ryder, Oct. 5, 1848, Ryder Papers, AGU.

<sup>20</sup> *Catalogus Provinciæ Marylandiæ, 1848* and *Catalogus Provinciæ Marylandiæ, 1849*, Archives of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, University Library, Special Collections Division, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. (hereafter abbreviated as AMPSJ).

<sup>21</sup> Frederick William Gockeln (La Val, France) to John Larkin, Sept. 7, 1848, Larkin Collection, ANYPSJ. Gockeln responded to complaints he had received about French Jesuits in New York.

<sup>22</sup> Brocard (Georgetown) to Roothaan, Feb. 27, 1849, Marylandia 1008-II-11; Nov. 10, 1849, Marylandia 1008-II-19; and Oct. 6, 1849, Marylandia 1008-II-17, all found in ARSI.



Events outside the walls of religious communities heightened tensions generated within by national differences. During the 1850s, the Know Nothing movement, which targeted Catholicism and foreigners, and Catholic writers and politicians as well, directed its ire against the Church and its clergy. Stories of villainous priests and nuns saturated the pages of sulfurous novels bearing titles such as Isaac Kelso's *Danger in the Dark: A Tale of Intrigue and Priestcraft* (1857). When hostility turned violent, Charles Stonestreet, Jesuit provincial of Maryland during the years 1852 to 1858, forbade his subjects to wear clerical garb in public. Fearing assaults on foreign priests, he even took it upon himself in 1852 to hide the identity of Irish and German Jesuits by disguising their names in the province catalog. "Without consulting the feeling of his victims," said a contemporary, he transformed "O'Toole" to "Toall" and "Walch to Wolch"; "O'Callaghan" became "Calligan" and "Bauermeister," "Barrister." Stonestreet's fears were not groundless. In 1854 a Know-Nothing crowd in Maine tarred and feathered John Bapst, a Swiss Jesuit.<sup>23</sup>

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In this superheated atmosphere, Jesuits grew acutely aware of ethnic identification. Whenever the time drew near for the appointment of a new provincial, factions formed along national lines. In 1854 Italians endorsed Angelo Paresce; Germans backed Burchard Villiger; and Americans favored one of their own. James A. Ward, a native, told Superior General Beckx that he should keep the Know Nothing threat in mind when making his choice. An imprudent appointment could "lead to worse things" in the "particularly dangerous . . . present state of this republic." Paresce and Villiger were sensible and "well versed in our rules," Ward advised, "but they are

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<sup>23</sup> [Barnum], "The Catalogue of 1852," [one page insert in] *Catalogus Provinciæ Marylandiæ*, 1853 (Baltimore, 1853), GTWN; and Curran, *Georgetown University*, 137.

not Americans, nor are they very well acquainted with the American spirit."<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, Villiger, a well-acculturated Swiss, got the job.

European critics of the fractious American scene conveyed their impressions to gatekeepers abroad. From the multinational communities of Maryland, observations, suggestions, and complaints streamed across the Atlantic. The picture they painted of religious life in the United States was not an endearing one: American Jesuits were too much men of the world. Acknowledging no separation between the secular and sacred realms, they slighted their religious duties and spent too much time in lay company. Absorption of the Georgetown College faculty in secular business thwarted the regular routines of a religious community, and scholastics were so immersed in college life that their intellectual and their spiritual formation suffered. Georgetown's unconventionality convinced newcomers that the place was not well suited for serious study. Its arrangement was so bizarre, one Italian claimed, that it defied description:

It is not an urban institution because it has a vineyard and adjacent small farm, and it is located outside the city. It is not rural, considering it has a library, museum, and even a footpath in the woods, which is daily visited and traversed at random by both the learned and unlearned alike—by men, women, and children, as it pleases them. . . . I do not think anything more anomalous could be found under the sun.<sup>25</sup>

## A Different Mindset

Insouciant disregard of codes of religious decorum presented itself daily. Traditional protocol required a Jesuit to travel with a companion whenever he left his residence, a usage that Americans found impractical and detrimental to effective ministry. They similarly ignored the rule prohibiting late-night visits outside the house except to attend to the sick or dying. And the frequency with which Americans socialized with women dismayed Europeans. When he attended the ceremonial laying of a cornerstone of a new church in Georgetown, the Roman priest Ugo Molza found it unseemly that lesser bottoms shared seats on the stage with the clergy. Students

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<sup>24</sup>James A. Ward (Baltimore) to Beckx, Nov. 17, 1854, Marylandia 1008-III-9, ARSI.

<sup>25</sup>Filippo Sacchi (Georgetown) to Roothaan, Jan. 23, 1839, Marylandia 1007-III-4, ARSI.



from the college and women guests were out of place on the dais, he grumbled. Accustomed to a hierarchical community in which priests occupied the top rung of the social ladder, the Jesuit was ill at ease in the socially fluid world of America. Benedetto Sestini was similarly scandalized when several Georgetown priests, including the provincial, attended a wedding reception marred by an unseemly exposure of female flesh. They "found themselves in the midst of a crowd of women . . . naked from the head to halfway down the chest and on the shoulders." The clergy "stayed until midnight and enjoyed the beautiful view," Sestini waspishly noted. "I confess, I would rather die than find myself in such an ugly situation."<sup>26</sup>

The American mode of living was further tainted by too much independence and too much individualism. Europeans readily acknowledged the blessings that religious liberty bestowed on their Church, agreeing with Georgetown's one-time president, Giovanni Grassi that "here, at last, the Catholic religion is not persecuted by public authority; here she enjoys peace." But they resisted the transference of notions of political freedom to religious life. As a French missionary put it, "The spirit of independence in this country does not mesh well with the spirit of the Society." Superior General Jan Roothaan concurred, declaring that the American passion for unrestrained individualism was for a religious order "like a second original sin." The ease with which American Jesuits gadded about, for example, startled outsiders habituated to a more monastic existence. When Georgetown's academic year came to a close, the Jesuit community moved en masse to the country for the customary summer "villa" or vacation. Expecting all would enjoy the holiday together, the Italians were stunned when the Americans struck out on their own, some of them relaxing at the beach while others headed for

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<sup>26</sup> "Calamo" [Sestini] (Georgetown) to Sopranis, 1859, Marylandia, 1008-VI-9 to 21, ARSI.

private destinations. As a result, the vacationers were soon winnowed down to Italians who had been left behind.<sup>27</sup>

And yet, some Neapolitans who arrived in the 1860s reveled in the fresh and heady liberty of America. The sudden lifting of conventional restraints was especially enticing to idiosyncratic personalities who relished diversions forbidden in Italy. The unbridled com-

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portment of one Neapolitan led partners to conclude he was useless. Eugenio Vetromile “has got a piano and a harp, a revolver and a gun, without any permission whatever that I know of,” wrote his superior, “although the use and even the keeping of such articles are strictly interdicted.” “He dresses himself and behaves as to fully deserve the appellation

which was given to him in Boston: *the dandy priest*.” For Neapolitans who had received “a more restricted training” in Italy, the theologian Camillo Mazzella concluded, the liberties granted them in America were downright “dangerous.”<sup>28</sup>

Some refugees burst free in more dramatic fashion. After two years in the United States, Almerico Zappone, a Neapolitan scholastic studying theology at Georgetown, decided he no longer wished to be a Jesuit, an about-face that reinforced the conviction that American laxity jeopardized the vocations of the young and compromised the work of the Society. The circumstance of his exodus in 1847 and subsequent marriage was reported by Peter Verhagen, the Jesuit provincial of Maryland. “One of our young Italian scholastics, Mr. Zappone, broke the rope about six weeks ago and succeeded in

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<sup>27</sup> Grassi, “Catholic Religion,” WL 11 (1882): 241 f.; Jean François Abbadie (Grand Couteau) to Roothaan, Mar. 23, 1839, in Cornelius M. Buckley, *Nicholas Point, S.J.: His Life and Northwest Indian Chronicles* (Chicago: Loyola Univ. Press, 1989), 155; Roothaan (Rome) to Sopranis, Jan. 9, 1851, Marylandia 1009-XI-17, ARSI; Pietro Galletti, *Memorie storiche intorno al P. Molza e alla Compagnia di Gesù in Roma durante il secolo XIX* (Rome: Tempesta, 1912), 44, 46.

<sup>28</sup> Vetromile’s antics described in John Bapst (Bangor, Maine) to Maryland Provincial, July 20, 1855, AMPSJ; Mazzella (Woodstock, Md.) to Palomba, June 25, 1876, ANPSJ.



realizing the ardent wish of his heart," Verhagen said. He was determined "to be free and to live in a free and independent country."

He left us . . . for Alexandria [Virginia]. There he went to board in an old Catholic widow's house. I foretold that his exit from the College would soon end in a comedy. I was right. Mr. Zappone got a wife; for on last Saturday, he was yoked to the old widow. Only think of such a folly! A young man of 24 years wedded to a tanned and withered granny of 64.<sup>29</sup>

Europeans questioned the American commitment to isolated-parish work. This apostolate seemed to them to contradict both the Society's accustomed mode of living and its principle of adapting to changing times and circumstances. Unlike diocesan clergy, who often lived alone, Jesuits typically resided in urban communities and toiled in tandem in a shared enterprise as educators, preachers, and spiritual directors. Before their dispersal, twenty-six priests and brothers in the Jesuit church in Naples taught, preached, and ministered to an urban population of over seven thousand persons. In 1847 the Roman College had housed a community of 151 Jesuits. Primarily engaged in teaching, they also conducted liturgies, heard confessions, led spiritual retreats, and directed sodalities.

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The typical European community further defined itself through a daily round of communal activities: rising and retiring at fixed times, personal prayer, liturgies and devotional exercises, recreation and meals.<sup>30</sup>

In the United States, however, every Jesuit seemed to cultivate his own garden. Missionaries were so scattered about in tiny rural

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<sup>29</sup> Verhagen (Georgetown) to McElroy, Feb. 4, 1847, AMPSJ; Volpe, *I Gesuiti*, 3:286.

<sup>30</sup> Statistics from *Catalogus sociorum et officiorum Provinciæ neapolitanæ Societatis Iesu ineunte anno 1860* (Naples, 1860) and *Catalogus Provinciæ romanæ Societatis Iesu ineunte anno 1847*, ARSI.

rectories that the customary lifestyle was impossible to observe fully—or it was simply ignored. For this reason, Benedetto Sestini declared, the country parishes of the Maryland Jesuits were “foreign to our Institute” and “a plague on this province.” “God knows how many misfortunes have occurred,” he mused, because of the lack of discipline and the irregularity that prevailed in these outposts.<sup>31</sup> Even Bishop John Hughes of New York agreed that parishes squandered Jesuit personnel. “If they wish to live out of their community,” the blunt prelate said, “let them become secular priests.”<sup>32</sup>

That the Maryland Jesuits had lost their punch is a judgment with which historians have concurred. Devoted to their country churches and crops, many older priests failed to grasp that the vital hub of American Catholicism had shifted from Maryland’s backwater counties to flourishing cities such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Bardstown.

Once the spiritual centers of Catholicism, these farms had become run-down reminders of a vanished past; as their farms deteriorated, the Jesuits became more covetous about the monetary value of these estates; pastoral lethargy settled in as the Jesuits bickered over ownership and control of the farms. While they worried about their farms, time passed them by and the Sulpicians took over the leadership role among the American clergy.<sup>33</sup>

European superiors had long urged retreat from the countryside, but their caveats were gently disregarded. This despite arguments from Europeans and from younger American Jesuits that altered circumstances called for a reevaluation of ministries. Pleading for more time, older Marylanders argued that only a gradual pull-back would enable them to find suitable diocesan clergy to replace departing Jesuits. Once disentangled from parochial duties, they promised to assign more men to traditional ministries such as “establishing schools in the large cities” and preaching retreats.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> “Calamo” [Sestini] (Georgetown) to Sopranis, 1859, Marylandia, 1008-VI-9 to 21, ARSI.

<sup>32</sup> Hughes cited in Larkin (New York) to Gockeln, May 15, 1849, Larkin Correspondence, ANYPSJ.

<sup>33</sup> Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 123.

<sup>34</sup> McElroy, Ryder, and Vespri (Frederick, Md.) to Grassi, June 17, 1843, Marylandia 1007-II-14, ARSI. One of the reasons for ending Jesuit slaveholding in 1838 had been to shift the Marylanders’ ministry to the care of urban whites, but that



Meanwhile, little changed. In 1854 John McElroy, founder of Boston College and a strong proponent of school work, complained to Rome about the corrosive effect parish administration had on the order's educational apostolate. "The missions in Maryland have retarded the progress of our Society very much," he said. They have "prevented us from having colleges, by this time, in all our large cities," where Jesuits could touch the lives of far more Catholics than they did by tilling fields in the countryside. A greater harvest would be had by using the schools as bases for pastoral work. The chief impediment to reform, McElroy believed, was the provincial, Charles Stonestreet, who was "very partial to our country missions, rather than colleges." We need an examiner here, he concluded, to investigate and set things aright.<sup>35</sup>

Five years later, in 1859, after no improvements had been made, Father General Pieter Beckx responded by sending an official visitor to the United States. An administrative official and personal emissary of the superior general, the visitor came not merely to inspect but also to implement reform if that was called for. "Maryland always gives me much to reflect on," Beckx confided to the visitor on the eve of his departure from Europe. "Many things are amiss."<sup>36</sup>

## Our Way of Proceeding

The person chosen to set things aright was Felice Sopranis, a member of the consortium of Roman expatriates who had fled to the United States in 1848. After a brief stint at Boston College, he had returned to Rome following the restoration of papal government and was serving as provincial of the Roman Province when summoned back to America. According to Beckx's directive, Sopranis was to review Jesuit undertakings not only in the Maryland Province, but throughout the country. In light of his European experience and his acquaintance with the United States, Sopranis seemed ideally suited to redeem Jesuit America. His inspection tour, which carried him

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transition was slow in coming. On the link between the termination of chattel slavery and new ministries, see Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding*, 187–92.

<sup>35</sup> McElroy (Boston) to Beckx, Sept. 27, 1854, Marylandia 1009-XIX-14, ARSI.

<sup>36</sup> Beckx (Rome) to Sopranis, Oct. 8, 1859, Marylandia 1008-Sopranis 1-V-1, ARSI.



from Canada to California, began in New York on October 25, 1859, and ended nearly four years later.<sup>37</sup>

On the East Coast, Sopranis was aided by the Georgetown astronomer-mathematician Benedetto Sestini, a long-time observer of the American scene. Fluent in English and Italian, the scientist was familiar both with the Society of Jesus in Europe and with its American incarnation. Few individuals, however, were more critical of Jesuit life in the United States. In a series of lengthy confidential letters written at the visitor's request, Sestini tallied the changes that had occurred in the province since Sopranis's return to Europe, and, as the visitor's official assistant, he proposed a slate of reforms.

"Never did I think I would see the Society in such trouble," Sestini began, re-sounding alarms he had raised in previous missives

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to Rome. The education given to American scholastics was woefully deficient because of the absence of well-trained professors. Their spiritual formation was no better, evidenced by the fact that too much license and too little discipline had resulted in the loss of many young vocations. To be sure, some progress had been made of late. For instance, the arrival of European Jesuits in 1848 led to the opening of a tertianship program for new priests and in the inauguration of "the first real novitiate." But the order's future in America also de-

manded a good, common seminary where priests-to-be could be properly educated and "well trained in the spirit" of the Society.<sup>38</sup>

Sestini grieved the Marylanders' commitment to parishes as a distraction incompatible with the cultivation of solid values. "Remove the parishes," he predicted, "and you will thereby remove a well spring of discord with the bishops and a source of jealousy

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<sup>37</sup> Gilbert Joseph Garraghan, *Jesuits of the Middle United States* (New York: America Press, 1938), 1:591n.

<sup>38</sup> "Calamo" [Sestini] (Georgetown) to Sopranis, 1859, Marylandia, 1008-VI-11, 20 to 21, ARSI.

between us and the diocesan clergy." He lamented the "irregularity of religious discipline" among his American brethren, discounting claims that "the circumstances of the country" required granting "greater freedom" here than was exercised by Jesuits elsewhere in the world. But he warned that any attempt to implement reforms would meet stiff resistance: parochial Americans instinctively closed their ears to any improvement proposed by a foreigner. They had such an inflated notion of their own country "that they feel a supreme scorn toward all others, England excepted."<sup>39</sup> The problems facing American Jesuits were formidable, Sestini concluded, but not insurmountable. Providence had permitted the dispersal of himself and the other Italian Jesuits in 1848 for a purpose. We have been placed here "as witnesses to shortcomings," he told Sopranis. Therefore, it was our solemn duty to exercise our "good influence" in order that "thought can finally be given to correction."<sup>40</sup>

Sopranis spent a year visiting institutions on the East Coast. When his tour ended in 1860, he issued a series of directives, which, according to one historian's summary, aimed at reforming Jesuit domestic life by imposing a tautly regulated regimen. Superiors, particularly presidents of the colleges, were instructed to review the Constitutions and Rules of the Society, and to "apply them gently but efficaciously." The imposition of a daily order in every community became de rigueur. No one should be allowed to rise from bed whenever he wished or to perform spiritual exercises at his own discretion. Meals should be taken in silence, when common reading was not supplied. Newspaper reading was restricted to superiors and those who he decided had a legitimate reason to peruse them. Everyone should be home before nightfall except priests engaged in essential ministry. No Jesuit should venture out alone in the evening, although, he conceded,

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*Only one native-born priest  
had been appointed  
provincial between 1840 and  
1877, a pattern that  
Americans resented.*

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<sup>39</sup> "Calamo" [Sestini] (Georgetown) to Sopranis, 1859, Marylandia 1008-VI-13 to 17, ARSI.

<sup>40</sup> "Calamo" [Sestini] (Georgetown) to Sopranis, 1859, Marylandia, 1008-VI-9 to 10, and 1008-VI-14 to 17, both in ARSI.



there were some pastoral circumstances when this could not be avoided.<sup>41</sup>

When Beckx issued marching orders to Sopranis, he had empowered him to withdraw workers from projects judged unsuccessful or irregular. Accordingly, the visitor closed six parochial missions and transferred several parishes to diocesan control. Although unable to effect a complete retreat from rural churches, Sopranis did facilitate a major shift in priorities. Once unfettered from the countryside, he reasoned, Jesuits would be freer for educational and pastoral work in the bustling modern cities of the East.<sup>42</sup>

The visitor wrestled with the vexing matter of leadership, an issue that had for years perturbed both American and European Jesuits, although for different reasons. Since the restoration of the Society in the United States, the highest offices in the Maryland Province had been staffed by foreigners. Only one native-born priest

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*No aspect of religious life in America was as much lamented by European Jesuits as the dismal state of seminary studies.*

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had been appointed provincial between 1840 and 1877, a pattern that Americans resented. "It seemed a kind of reflection on the men of the province," one Marylander observed, "that for so many years none of them were chosen to rule it."<sup>43</sup> No one was more sensitive to the delicate position of outsiders than Burchard Villiger,

the accommodating provincial from German-speaking Switzerland. "Would that we had an American provincial in this region!" he told Beckx, repeating Sestini's charge that Americans showed "a natural repugnance toward everything foreign."<sup>44</sup> Most Europeans agreed, however, that few Americans were qualified to govern according to

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Emmett Curran, *American Jesuit Spirituality: The Maryland Tradition, 1634–1900* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 24.

<sup>42</sup> Francis X. Talbot, S.J., *Jesuit Education in Philadelphia: St. Joseph's College, 1851–1926* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's College, 1927), 65 f.

<sup>43</sup> Curran, *American Jesuit Spirituality*, 21; Patrick J. Dooley, *Woodstock and Its Makers* (Woodstock, Maryland: Woodstock College Press, 1927), 74.

<sup>44</sup> Villiger (Worcester, Mass.) to Beckx, May 21, 1859, Marylandia 1008-IV-8; see also Curran, *American Jesuit Spirituality*, 32; Calamo [Sestini] (Georgetown) to Sopranis, 1859, Marylandia 1008-VI-9 to 21, ARSI.



the true spirit of the Society. Consequently, at the close of Sopranis's visit in 1859, another European, the Neapolitan Angelo Paresce, was named to head the Maryland Province.

With Paresce's appointment and with the promulgation of Sopranis's decrees, Italian agency moved toward its apogee. Within a decade of their arrival in 1848, Europeans had already transformed American Jesuit life. Strengthened by an influx of immigrant clergy, the Society was now better able to meet the needs of a mushrooming Catholic population. Its colleges had benefited from the acquisition of teachers and from the redirecting of energies from parish work to the classroom. The improvement was immediate, a Georgetown Jesuit attested, thanks to "the great benefit and successes" that "the arrival of numerous missionaries from different orders and of other religious has brought to us."<sup>45</sup>

But the coming of the Europeans was a mixed blessing. Although they boosted urban educational work, their understanding of the order's traditions clashed with the practices of their American counterparts. National differences precipitated strife between outsiders and natives regarding the way their vocation was to be lived in the United States. A Jesuit official in Missouri, William S. Murphy, reflecting on conflicts that erupted in the Midwest after the arrival of displaced Europeans, spoke for many English speakers when he wrote in 1855, "We are every day more and more resolved to invite no foreign aid." Most Jesuit leaders conceded that the struggling order in the United States needed reform, but few of them believed that a strict imposition of foreign customs was the solution.<sup>46</sup> Protest was pointless, however, because, as events subsequently demonstrated, the Society of Jesus,

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*Personnel shortages meant also that scholastics were frequently pulled from study and put to work. The seminaries had become mere appendages of colleges for whom the preparation of trainee Jesuits ranked low on the list of institutional priorities.*

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<sup>45</sup> Antonio Wiesend (Georgetown) to Jean Muller, Mar. 13, 1848, Thomas F. Mulledy Papers, Catholic Historical Manuscripts Collection, AGU.

<sup>46</sup> Murphy (St. Louis?) to Stonestreet, Dec. 12, 1855, AMPSJ; Curran, *American Jesuit Spirituality*, 25.

like the American Catholic Church itself, would increasingly conform to a European model.

## II. The Training of Scholastics

**O**f all the reforms introduced by Europeans, however, the greatest was yet to come: the restructuring of Jesuit formation. The Italians' crowning achievement was the founding in 1869 of Woodstock College, Maryland, a national seminary for the cultivation of future priests. Americans could now pursue the same course of studies in philosophy and theology that was standard in Europe, thus pulling them into the intellectual orbit of the Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus worldwide.

The low quality of seminary training in America was one of the few issues on which Catholic and Protestant church leaders agreed. At a time when science seemed to confute the relevance of faith, churches required ministers who could mediate the Gospel to the modern world. "The crude public performances of incompetent young preachers" were no longer acceptable, insisted Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard. Instead of the isolated denominational seminaries that had sufficed in the past, Eliot proposed that ecclesiastics undergo "theological education at universities or other centers of diversified intellectual activity." Similar concerns animated Catholics. After Archbishop Gaetano Bedini of Italy visited the United States in 1853, he left with the sad impression that "the most outstanding priest is the one that has built the most churches and begun the most institutions." What the country needed, he argued, were priests with "a wider, more complete and more solid education."<sup>47</sup>

No aspect of religious life in America was as much lamented by European Jesuits as the dismal state of seminary studies. "With the exception of some fathers who have been to Rome," a French priest wrote, "hardly any have been trained according to the rules of

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<sup>47</sup> Eliot and Bedini in John Tracy Ellis, "Short History of Seminary Education: II—Trent to Today," in *Seminary Education in a Time of Change*, ed. James Michael Lee and Louis J. Putz (Notre Dame: Fides, 1965), 58 f., 65 n.62; Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), 735–38.



our Institute."<sup>48</sup> In 1840, when Stefano Gabaria, a Piedmontese priest who had been appointed superior of scholastics at Georgetown College, began delivering Latin exhortations to his students, he met a wall of resistance—not just from seminarians but also from priests who were not fluent in the ecclesiastical patois. Three years later, Georgetown's president, James Curley, built an expensive astronomical observatory on campus, only to find out when it was done that he had misinterpreted a letter in elegant Latin from Roothaan forbidding the project.<sup>49</sup>

Poor training commenced in the novitiate, the two-year period when candidates were introduced to Jesuit life. Once admitted, trainees received a slapdash preparation, a shortcoming that no one denied but none could correct. Benedetto Sestini believed that most American Jesuits had never made a real novitiate, never truly studied, nor even laid eyes on a well-ordered and disciplined religious community. "It is not an exaggeration to say," he told Roothaan, that vine dressers who labor at the Jesuit farms of Macao and Santa Sabina in Rome "more closely resemble properly formed men of the Society than do some of the missionaries that we have scattered about the countryside here."<sup>50</sup>

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*In the context of a rapidly expanding Church, the freshly restored Society of Jesus, like an adolescent incapable of self-restraint, found it difficult to resist taking on more commitments than it could manage.*

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John McElroy, an Irishman who entered the order in 1806, recalled his introduction to religious life at Georgetown College. "I entered the Society as lay brother, [and was soon] employed as clerk, procurator, assistant cook, gardener, prefect, teacher of writing, arithmetic, etc. In these duties was I occupied during the two years of novitiate." Even after deciding to become a priest, McElroy was granted little time to prepare himself. "I was promised time to study, it is true, but as yet it has

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<sup>48</sup> Antoine Rey (Georgetown) to Roothaan, July 22, 1842, Marylandia 1007-I-51, ARSI.

<sup>49</sup> Francis Vespre (Georgetown) to Roothaan, Jan. 16, 1841, Marylandia 1007-I-33, ARSI; Curran, *Georgetown University*, 141.

<sup>50</sup> Sestini (Georgetown) to Roothaan, July 6, 1852, Marylandia 1008-II-53, ARSI.



not arrived."<sup>51</sup> A generation later, this was still common practice. Unlike Europe, where the restored Society had grown rapidly, the Society in America suffered for decades from a lack of priests who might provide seminary instruction. Personnel shortages meant also that scholastics were frequently pulled from study and put to work. The seminaries had become mere appendages of colleges for whom the preparation of trainee Jesuits ranked low on the list of institutional priorities.

Theological study was further compromised by its limited scope. An American predilection for polemics and apologetics mandated that priests be equipped, as one Jesuit expressed it, "to meet

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*Paresce settled instead on a 245-acre farm in Maryland's bucolic Patapsco Valley, twenty-five miles west of Baltimore, near the village of Woodstock. Thus it was that the Jesuit siege mentality combined with an American anti-urban bias to place the scholasticate in a secluded forest.*

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the objections and errors rampant in the country."<sup>52</sup> This meant that speculative analysis was subordinated to the nitty-gritty, especially to preparing for debate with Protestant adversaries on controversial issues of the day. As a result, American Jesuits remained ignorant of theological trends and traditions beyond their shores. In this milieu preaching was prized above all else, as the Sulpician Archbishop of Baltimore, Ambrose Maréchal, said in 1826. "The grand object that the good of religion in this country demands that you

have principally under your eyes, is sacred eloquence." Proficiency in the pulpit was "infinitely more important," he shrugged, than mastering "the learned words of our most celebrated theologians."<sup>53</sup>

Pressure to supply clergy for a soaring Catholic population intensified the temptation to cut study short and to ordain men to

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<sup>51</sup> McElroy to Stonestreet, July 21, 1847, in "The Novitiate in Maryland," WL 44 (1915): 9 f.

<sup>52</sup> Dooley, *Woodstock and Its Makers*, 151.

<sup>53</sup> Maréchal in John Tracy Ellis, "The Formation of the American Priest: An Historical Perspective," in *The Catholic Priest in the United States: Historical Investigations*, ed. John Tracy Ellis (Collegeville, Minn.: Saint John's Univ. Press, 1971), 19, 32.

the priesthood with undue haste. There were never enough pastors to meet new needs spawned by the arrival of immigrants from abroad and by westward expansion. For example, by 1863 the Maryland Province—although its total membership had climbed to 140—counted only 44 priests in its ranks; and it was running nineteen institutions, including five colleges. In the context of a rapidly expanding Church, the freshly restored Society of Jesus, like an adolescent incapable of self-restraint, found it difficult to resist taking on more commitments than it could manage. “Our colleges, by no means sufficient to meet the wants of the country, were still too numerous for our limited supply of professors,” a Maryland Jesuit said in 1863. “Hence our own studies were abridged and confined to what was strictly necessary in order that we might the sooner be employed in teaching.”<sup>54</sup>

Although an inpouring of foreign clergy upgraded schooling, the most radical innovation came in 1860. Visitor Felice Sopranis, acting on instructions from the superior general, ordered the creation of a house of studies to which all scholastics in the United States would come for philosophical and theological study. Only individuals whose health or ability would be better served by completing a short course in their home province or mission were exempted from attending. By pooling resources and faculty, Sopranis aimed at bettering the quality of instruction and bringing it into alignment with normative Jesuit practice. The scholasticate whose creation he promoted would consequently emerge as the order’s flagship for training priests. Indeed, in the view of one scholar, it became “the nation’s most influential Catholic seminary.”

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*In this uneasy milieu, Jesuits groped for safe surroundings in which to school trainees. At odds with the world, they espoused a religious asceticism that reflected their alienation from the age.*

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<sup>54</sup> Statistics in *Catalogus Provinciæ Marylandiæ*, 1863, ARSI; Augustus Langcake, “Letter from Mr. Langcake, St. John’s College, Fordham, Dec. 1, 1863, *Letters and Notices* 2 (1864): 65 f.



Through its graduates the institution molded Catholic life across the country for decades to come.<sup>55</sup>

Wasting no time, in 1860 Sopranis inaugurated a temporary program at Boston College, then located in the downtown section of the city. Thus was launched the first combined Jesuit scholasticate in the United States, the innovative predecessor of programs that would become common in the twentieth century. But the seminary, which by 1863 enrolled forty-four students, did not remain long in Boston, not only because of disruptions caused by the Civil War, but

also because the visitor had his eye fixed on a location removed from the distractions of an urban environment, something the superior general himself had ordered.<sup>56</sup>

The search for a final location fell to Angelo Paresce, the Neapolitan provincial of the Maryland Jesuits. Upon assuming office, he reeled off the pros and cons of various options in several letters to the superior general, Pieter Beckx. To Maryland Jesuits who insisted the scholasticate remain on a college

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*In this troubled context, the site selected for the new seminary at Woodstock beckoned as a cordon sanitaire. Buffered by deep woods and stretching fields, it shielded seminarians, in Paresce's words, "from every danger and distraction."*

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campus, Paresce was unbending. That Georgetown College offered many advantages (a splendid observatory, a magnificent library, and healthy surroundings), he readily agreed, but even if nudged to a quiet periphery of the campus, the seminary would still be too accessible to the public. In short, no college could ever provide the "discipline, recollection, [and] application to study that are required to train our scholastics."<sup>57</sup> In his dogged insistence upon separation, Paresce concurred with a growing number of contemporary educa-

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<sup>55</sup> John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 107.

<sup>56</sup> Statistics regarding the Boston scholasticate found in *Catalogus Provinciæ Marylandiæ*, 1863, ARSI; Beckx to Sopranis, Sept. 25, 1861 [Summary of Father General's Correspondence: Missions of the English Assistancy, Nov. 1, 1861-Oct. 6, 1891], ARSI; G. J. Garraghan, "The Project of a Common Scholasticate for the Society of Jesus in North America," *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* 2 (1933): 1-10.

<sup>57</sup> Paresce (Baltimore) to Beckx, Dec. 27, 1861, Marylandia 1009-XX-5, ARSI.



tors who believed that crowded living arrangements, economic miseries, crime, and bad sanitation made the modern industrial city a poor place to train the young.

## Removed from All Dangers and Distractions

Accordingly, Paresce settled instead on a 245-acre farm in Maryland's bucolic Patapsco Valley, twenty-five miles west of Baltimore, near the village of Woodstock. Thus it was that the Jesuit siege mentality combined with an American anti-urban bias to place the scholasticate in a secluded forest. The property, which was purchased in 1866 for \$4,500, boasted all the advantages its planners dreamed of.<sup>58</sup> Atop a sunny hill overlooking a stream, the wooded acreage was, reported Paresce, "in the country far from our other houses and colleges in a healthy location." In this sylvan setting, the seminarians would be freed from the burden of prefecting and other competing labors while pursuing their sole responsibility, the study of philosophy and theology.<sup>59</sup> The institution was named Woodstock College.

When authorities decreed that the new house of studies arise far from a large metropolis, they departed from the Society's earlier preference for urban settings. With the outbreak of national revolutions, however, many major cities, including Rome itself, had become perilous. When political unrest on a global scale hurled thousands of Jesuits into exile, caution and discretion became the new watchwords. "We should take great care to leave nothing exposed which can in any way furnish our adversaries with matter for calumny, or with a specious pretext for increasing their opposition," Roothaan had warned in 1845. "One can hardly believe how watchful our enemies are, even of our most ordinary actions."<sup>60</sup> In this uneasy milieu, Jesuits groped for safe surroundings in which to

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<sup>58</sup> An additional 177 acres was annexed to the original tract in 1880. See [Ryan], "Woodstock College," 9, AGU. For an account of the opening of the college, see "North America," *Letters and Notices* [English Jesuit Province newsletter] 7 (1870): 50-58.

<sup>59</sup> Paresce (Baltimore) to Beckx, May 1865, Marylandia 1010-XXV-1.

<sup>60</sup> Roothaan, "A Letter upon Prosperity and the Dangers That Attend It," *Select Letters of Our Very Reverend Fathers General to the Fathers and Brothers of the Society of Jesus* (Woodstock, Maryland: Woodstock College Press, 1900), 265.

school trainees. At odds with the world, they espoused a religious asceticism that reflected their alienation from the age.

The beleaguered outlook that European expatriates brought to the United States found its counterpart in fears that Americans held about their own country. During the worst years of the Know Nothing movement, Catholic clergy kept a low profile in the hope of skirting nativist assault. Seminaries, a conspicuous focus of public scrutiny, exercised special caution, which was one of the reasons why Paresce objected to planting a program in Boston. During the Civil War, for example, superiors advised Jesuits to keep mum about the conflict lest they provoke offense and fan the flames of anti-Catholicism. And it did not help that an Italian Jesuit was arrested for the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Mistaken for John Wilkes Booth, to whom he bore a resemblance, Giovanni Guida was detained by authorities. Although released, news of his arrest fed a widespread rumor that Jesuits had participated in the murder of the president.<sup>61</sup>

In this troubled context, the site selected for the new seminary at Woodstock beckoned as a *cordon sanitaire*. Buffered by deep woods and stretching fields, it shielded seminarians, in Paresce's words, "from every danger and distraction." In that safe haven, they would be free to wear religious garb without fear of recrimination and to peruse their books without diversion. Nearby hamlets supplied opportunities to teach catechism and to preach "without being exposed to the dangers of the city." Like a self-contained military citadel, Woodstock College "provided every advantage that will promote orderliness [and] regular discipline."<sup>62</sup>

## A New Type of Seminary

Flight to the countryside was also rooted in contemporary American attitudes about clerical education. Since the sixteenth-century Council of Trent, Catholics had believed that training should occur within the context of existing institutions. For diocesan semi-

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<sup>61</sup> "P. Giovanni Battista Guida," *Lettere edificanti della Provincia napoletana*, 1914–1920 (Naples, 1921), 152 f. See also WL 49 (1920): 122–26; on Catholics and the Civil War, see McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 66–75.

<sup>62</sup> Paresce (Baltimore) to Beckx, Dec. 27, 1861, Marylandia 1009-XX-5; and Paresce (Baltimore) to Beckx, n.d. May 1865, Marylandia 1010-XXV-1, both in ARSI.



narians it had been the local cathedral, which was engaged in a host of activities of which the instruction of trainees was only one component. For members of religious orders such as the Jesuits, preparation had taken place at a local college or university located in the heart of a city in the midst of a Catholic community. But the growth of the Church in the United States led to the emergence of a novel type of seminary. After 1850, small local institutions no longer met the needs of a Church that experienced massive immigration and climbing numbers of candidates for the priesthood. To consolidate resources and to provide more specialized formation, there developed the free-standing seminary, an institution that existed independent of and apart from other ecclesiastical operations.

This innovative academy was similar to other so-called total institutions of the period—penitentiaries and asylums for orphans and insane persons. In accord with current social theory, the care of prisoners, orphans, and the sick was best removed from local and familial settings and assigned to specialized establishments dedicated to providing for large numbers. Hence, the free-standing seminary, like contemporary prisons, hospitals, and asylums, was devoted solely to one purpose: the training of large numbers of clergy. And, as one scholar has said, the new institution, unlike its Tridentine predecessor, forged a milieu in which seminarians and their priest-professors pursued a life divorced from other activities. A similar shift to a closed educational system occurred in Europe, particularly in response to anticlerical persecutions in the second half of the century. With few exceptions, detachment was bolstered by a physical setting apart from an urban neighborhood.<sup>63</sup>

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*In 1872, the college began publishing Woodstock Letters, a periodical dedicated to news about Jesuit undertakings in the United States and abroad.*

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Woodstock College was one such place. A self-quarantined retreat whose sole raison d'être was clerical formation, it was not

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<sup>63</sup> Joseph M. White, "The Diocesan Seminary and the Community of Faith," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 11 (1993): 1–20; Joseph M. White, *The Diocesan Seminary in the United States: A History from the 1870s to the Present* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 67–85.



only armored against the distractions of the outside world, but supplied most of its own needs. Fields of crops, orchards, gardens, a vineyard, herds of cattle, barns, a slaughter house, carpenters' shops, laundry, and a hot house for the cultivation of plants—all testified to institutional independence, as did a baseball field, tennis courts, and a network of walking paths that offered opportunities for healthy exercise for the 162 young Jesuits who were enrolled by 1885. The College opened St. Inigo Manor in southern Maryland in 1876, a getaway where scholastics could take summer vacation in an environment as marooned and highly controlled as the seminary itself. Woodstock even created its own cemetery. The custodians of this vast enterprise were a staff of nearly thirty Jesuit brothers who performed the duties of cook, gardener, vintner, cattleman, carpenter, butcher, blacksmith, plumber, laundryman, tailor, shoemaker, night watchman, infirmarian, janitor, printer, and porter. As the historian John L. Ciani has observed in his excellent study of the institution, "Whatever the brothers could not do was brought in for the scholastics: the dentist came to them."<sup>64</sup>

From the print shop issued a flood of textbooks. These included volumes in theology, philosophy, science, and mathematics, as well as catechisms, programs and student theses. In 1872 the

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*The institution's leafy seclusion did not gladden its occupants, however.*

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college began publishing *Woodstock Letters*, a periodical dedicated to news about Jesuit undertakings in the United States and abroad. The journal remained in print until 1969, when the theologate moved to New York City. The Woodstock Press also produced the *Messenger*

of the *Sacred Heart*, a popular religious magazine with wide circulation. Founded at Georgetown in 1866 by Benedetto Sestini, the journal transferred to Woodstock when its editor joined the faculty.

Because of the priority given to instruction in the natural sciences, Paresce began assembling a physics cabinet and natural-history museum through purchases in Europe even before the

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<sup>64</sup> John L. Ciani, "Across a Wide Ocean: Salvatore Maria Brandi, S.J., and the 'Civiltà cattolica' from Americanism to Modernism, 1891-1914," (Ph.D. diss. presented at the University of Virginia, 1992), 66 f. In the pages that follow, I rely heavily upon Ciani for my analysis of early Woodstock College.

college opened its doors. Carlo Piccirillo, a theologian with a passion for natural history, would later augment the collection by soliciting donations of mineral and biological specimens from missionaries and Woodstock graduates around the world. The seminary took advantage of its bridge to the American West. Some objects were obtained through barter, as when Piccirillo acquired ninety bird nests (130 pounds worth) from a priest in the Southwest. "With each nest is a card indicating the genus and species of the bird," explained the donor, who in return received a subscription of Woodstock imprints for the Jesuit college in New Mexico.<sup>65</sup>

The institution's leafy seclusion did not gladden its occupants, however. "Cut off from every temptation to distraction or dissipation of mind," Woodstock provided "a noble home for the exclusive use of studies," one Jesuit allowed, but its isolation was depressing. "As far as his sight could reach, trees were ever in view." When a student "mounted to the top of the house, he would find still more and denser trees, and more far-reaching to the North and West."<sup>66</sup>

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*Woodstock offered inmates two options, he quipped in Latin, Aut studium aut suicidium (Either study or suicide).*

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"If any sound breaks the stillness," another inmate wrote, "it is the wonted snorting of the locomotive, as it turns a corner close by, and thundering with the cars through the valley below is lost again round another bend: *sic transit gloria mundi*."<sup>67</sup> The place was as remote as the deserts of ancient Egypt. Jesuit wags contemplated posting over the main gate the warning that had startled Virgil and Dante on their descent into Hades: "Abandon all hope, you who enter here."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> F. X. Tomassini (Las Vegas, New Mexico) to Piccirillo, Feb. 1, 1880, Piccirillo Papers, Woodstock College Archives, University Library, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. (hereafter abbreviated as WCA). See also "Father Charles Piccirillo; a Sketch," WL 17 (1888): 339–50.

<sup>66</sup> Dooley, *Woodstock and Its Makers*, 23, 47.

<sup>67</sup> "North America," *Letters and Notices* 7 (1870): 55.

<sup>68</sup> Robert I. Gannon, *Up to the Present: The Story of Fordham* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 95.



Woodstock's confinement weighed on the faculty. A classic response to the place was coined by Domenico Pantanella, a thirty-eight-year-old Neapolitan philosopher who arrived there after teaching at the lively Georgetown campus. Woodstock offered inmates two options, he quipped in Latin, *Aut studium aut suicidium* (Either study or suicide). "We live as exiles from our fatherland in a deserted place," Pantanella told friends in Italy.<sup>69</sup> "Everyone soon regretted the choice," Camillo Mazzella, the school's dean, admitted "but now that it is done, it cannot be undone."<sup>70</sup>

### *Scuola italiana*

Every detail of Woodstock's creation bore the imprint of Italy, from conception to design, from construction to daily operation. Felice Sopranis, acting on instructions from Rome, had mandated its erection. Angelo Paresce, from his headquarters in Baltimore, oversaw its founding, and when his term as provincial ended, he became its first rector. Benedetto Sestini, who transferred from Georgetown to Woodstock to teach mathematics and science, supervised much of the construction because, in the words of an ironic contemporary, the seminary's requirements lay "outside the experience of the ordinary architect." Its chapel was fashioned in "the Italian style," which mandated the importing of holy remains from Italy: under the high altar rested the "waxen body of a Roman soldier whose relics are encased in the body." The library and science museum were handsomely frescoed by the versatile Sestini. Domenico Pantanella, a philosopher whose gifts lay in the practical realm, supervised the landscaping of the green park surrounding the college. Its centerpiece was a parterre designed "to reproduce the form of the plaza of St. Peter's in Rome." Even the workmen at the seminary were Italians, poor immigrants from New York whose destitution had moved Paresce to offer them employment.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Dooley, *Woodstock and Its Makers*, 48; Domenico Pantanella (Woodstock) to Palomba, Oct. 8, 1872, ANPSJ, in Ciani, "Across a Wide Ocean," 57.

<sup>70</sup> Camillo Mazzella (Woodstock) to Palomba, June 25, 1876, ANPSJ. The college was relocated to New York City in 1969.

<sup>71</sup> "Maryland: Letter from Brother Van Rensselaer," *Letters and Notices* 15 (1882): 200-3; Dooley, *Woodstock and Its Makers*, 8, 52. "Many poor Italians have arrived in New York, peasants who were dying of starvation," wrote Joseph Keller. "Fr. Paresce went there and brought several back to work at Woodstock and they are



Italy also supplied teachers. As early as 1862, Paresce had approached dispersed Neapolitans in Europe about staffing the scholasticate. America's climate, customs, and diet would exact "a not inconsiderable sacrifice," he warned, but the presence of other Italian expatriates would "make their coming considerably easier." Besides, they were "not coming to live in the wilderness." They will discover here "a nation and a people that is highly civilized," a religious community that "observes religious poverty, but is still comfortable," a decent library, and well-equipped scientific laboratories containing "the best instruments from Paris." "There is work for all," he continued, especially for men who were "young, have a good attitude, are secure" in their vocation and "ready to adapt."<sup>72</sup> In 1867 Paresce finalized a compact with Neapolitans who agreed to teach at Woodstock. In exchange, the Maryland Jesuits committed to educate the scholastics of the exiled province free of charge. With that consensus, Paresce acquired *en bloc* a cadre of experienced faculty, and the Neapolitans secured asylum for their younger men who, after finishing their studies and learning English, would take up work in the West.

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Thus it was that Woodstock College became for many Neapolitans a stepping stone to their mission in distant New Mexico, launched that same year. There, in 1877, the exiles founded Las Vegas College, in New Mexico, which was transferred to Denver as Regis College. The Eastern seminary played a similar role for Piedmontese exiles on the Pacific Coast, who, although they did not regularly supply Woodstock with teachers, did send scholastics to Maryland for training. As one Jesuit explained, mastery in English could more easily be secured there than in Italy, "and good English

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happy there." See Keller (Baltimore) to Palomba, 2 Jan. 1873, ANPSJ.

<sup>72</sup>Sopranis (Rome) to Beckx, Sept. 25, 1861, Marylandia 1008-Sopranis 1-IV-2, ARSI; Paresce (Baltimore) to Francisco Ferrante, Jan. 8, 1867, ANPSJ; Paresce (Baltimore) to Beckx, May 1865, Marylandia 1010-XXV-1, ARSI.

was more and more demanded at Santa Clara and San Francisco."<sup>73</sup> Thus Woodstock functioned as a fulcrum between Europe and the frontier, a place of transition where missionaries-to-be perfected the skills they would need as mediators of cultures in the West.

When Woodstock's founders assembled in 1869 to ceremonially open the new scholasticate, six of the ten professors were Italian. Italians so dominated the place that Pantanella once told the Neapolitan provincial, "Your reverence cannot have colleges in Italy, but

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*When the college opened, the dean announced that it would model itself on the Roman College, intending that the seminary would embrace both the pedagogy and intellectual content of Roman training.*

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console yourself with the one that is in America."<sup>74</sup> Even as they gathered, the armies of united Italy were preparing their final assault on Rome, which in 1870 marked the end of the Papal States and the final expulsion of Jesuits from the new Italian nation. Displacement left its mark on the staff. Almost every one of the first faculty had been touched by revolution and exile, and many of them were long remembered for

the ways in which the aftershocks had molded their character. The philosopher Carmelo Polino, for example, gave an impression to students that the *Risorgimento* had "cured him forever of any sympathy he might have had with the republican form of government and made him a staunch defender of absolutism."<sup>75</sup>

The most distinguished of the scholarly émigrés, thirty-six-year-old Camillo Mazzella, was equally unable to shake entrenched ideas brought over from Italy. Although soon an American citizen, the ample theologian remained suspicious of the tainted atmosphere of his new homeland. A veritable Niagra of opinions about the United States, he informed the Jesuit superior general that American culture was permeated with "materialism, naturalism, rationalism," and "indifferentism," errors which even tainted the clergy. Some American Jesuits, for instance, advocated the separation of church

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<sup>73</sup> Dooley, *Woodstock and Its Makers*, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Pantanella (Woodstock) to Palomba, Dec. 8, 1873, ANPSJ.

<sup>75</sup> Ciani, "Across a Wide Ocean," 55; Dooley, *Woodstock and Its Makers*, 85, 137 f.; "Father Aloysius Sabetti," WL 29 (1900): 216-23.



and state. Others failed to comprehend “why the Pope does not allow Protestant churches to be built in Rome.” Mazzella was skeptical of Angelo Paresce and others of his countrymen who had accommodated to life in the United States. Believing “everything here was better than in Italy or Naples,” such men had become, he chided, “more American than the Americans.”<sup>76</sup>

## The Roman College Replicated

It was not to the United States, therefore, that Mazzella turned for guidance in crafting Woodstock's curriculum. When the college opened, the dean announced that it would model itself on the Roman College, intending that the seminary would embrace both the pedagogy and intellectual content of Roman training. Accordingly, the philosophy program ballooned into a comprehensive three-year course, and the theology curriculum to four; both sequences were based on the unitary Neo-Scholastic system that was currently being adopted abroad. So faithfully did Mazzella and his associates replicate the Roman prototype that their work drew praise from Archbishop Francesco Satolli, apostolic delegate to the United States, when he visited the seminary. “The inmates of Woodstock,” he declared, “though far distant from the Holy See, are imbued with the same doctrine, the same spirit which are fostered in the Eternal City.”<sup>77</sup>

One of the ways in which Woodstock mirrored the Collegio Romano was through its embrace of Scholasticism as developed by St. Thomas Aquinas. The rediscovery of Thomistic thought in the early-nineteenth century had sparked an intellectual revolution in Europe, and Mazzella and his colleagues—some of whom had been instrumental in promoting the revival in Italy—worked to introduce that tradition into the United States. In that endeavor they were strikingly successful. Their role in standardizing philosophical and theological instruction under the Thomistic banner testified to their potent ability to transform themselves from marginal castaways to major players in the American Church. Thus, the transplanted Italians of Woodstock—Mazzella, De Augustinis, Sabetti, Russo,

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<sup>76</sup> Mazzella (Woodstock) to Beckx, May 21, 1870, Marylandia 1010-XXV-6, ARSJ; Mazzella (Woodstock) to Palomba, June 25, 1876, ANPSJ.

<sup>77</sup> “Archbishop Satolli at Woodstock,” WL 19 (1890): 5.



Brandi, and others—authored treatises that disseminated Thomism across the United States. By the 1890s that prototype was flourishing even in distant Montana, where scholastics at St. Ignatius Mission pored over Thomistic textbooks and manuals authored at Woodstock.<sup>78</sup>

The school's impact did not end with intellectual formation. By supporting Pope Leo XIII's campaign to restore the tradition of St. Thomas to a place of honor in Catholic institutions (outlined in his 1879 encyclical, *Æterni Patris*), the Woodstock scholars enhanced

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*A liberal or progressive consortium, dominated by Irish-Americans, sought to form a more indigenous Church by quickly adapting to American ways.*

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devotion to the Holy See. For Neo-Thomists, the defense of Catholic doctrine and that of papal power were inextricably yoked. As John L. Ciani has observed, the founders of Woodstock "were not just exiles living in a foreign land and recreating a universal and static church as a substitute for home." They were, like their countrymen who became western mis-

sionaries, "agents of a centralizing ecclesiastical authority desirous of universal and trans-Atlantic unity and uniformity in a threatening period of religious and political upheaval."<sup>79</sup> Their watchwords were not accommodation and inculturation—to use contemporary parlance—but assimilation and conformity.

## Global Events

The faculty's commitment to ecclesial centralization was evident in their role in the so-called Americanist controversy that shook the Church at century's end. That struggle, which split the episcopacy of the United States into opposing groups, centered on efforts to accommodate Catholicism to the American scene. A liberal or progressive consortium, dominated by Irish-Americans, sought to

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<sup>78</sup> Wilfred P. Schoenberg, *Jesuit Mission Presses in the Pacific Northwest: A History and Bibliography of Imprints, 1876–1899* (Portland: Champoege Press, 1957) 42 f.

<sup>79</sup> Ciani, "Across a Wide Ocean," 65. See also Gerald McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), 27.

form a more indigenous Church by quickly adapting to American ways. A rival bloc, dominated by traditionalists and Curia officials in Rome, emphasized the supranational character of the Church. Fearful that accommodation would undermine ecclesial solidarity and anxious lest the liberal contagion contaminate Europe, they promoted a continental European version of Catholicism and called for greater centralization of the American Church under Roman authority.

These disagreements were finally resolved by a series of papal interventions in favor of the transnational position. In 1895 Leo XIII issued a letter to the American hierarchy, *Longinqua oceani*, demanding conformity to Roman guidelines. Four years later, his encyclical *Testem benevolentiae* dismissed other notions associated with Americanism, including the idea that the Church should adapt its teaching to the modern age. Jesuits played no small role in the victory over Americanism. Among the most effective proponents of Romanization were Camillo Mazzella and Salvatore Brandi. By the time the controversy came to a head, both men had returned to Rome, the former as a cardinal of the Church and the latter as editor of the authoritative journal *La civiltà cattolica*. The two former Woodstock professors not only led the charge against Americanism, they helped deliver its coup de grâce. Brandi boasted authorship of *Longinqua oceani*, and Mazzella played a major role in the composition of *Testem benevolentiae*.<sup>80</sup>

## To Teach Nothing New

Although the Woodstock faculty won international celebrity for their part in bringing American Catholicism into alignment with the universal Church, they were not masters of creativity. The common threads running through their writings were unswerving dedication to Scholasticism, suspicion of modern ideas, and unshakable defense of ecclesiastical authority. "He never claimed any originality," a confrere said of Luigi Sabetti, whose manual in moral theology, *Compendium theologiae moralis*, was printed in thirteen editions and adopted throughout the Catholic world. "I do not mean

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<sup>80</sup> Ciani, "Across a Wide Ocean," 184 f., 206; Gerald P. Fogarty, *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy from 1870 to 1965* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1985), 171-75.



originality of principles for that would be a very dangerous claim for any theologian to make; but even originality of treatment." Parrot-like, Sabetti simply adapted the principles of previous scholars "to changed circumstances of time and place."<sup>81</sup> Nor was creativeness the trademark of his associates. Teacher Emilio De Augustinis shunned "the dangerous gift of originality in theology," wrote Patrick J. Dooley, a tongue-in-cheek chronicler of early Woodstock, "for originality bordered too closely on the precipice of heresy to suit his mind." The theologian Salvatore Brandi, a disciple of Mazzella, plowed a similarly straight furrow. Although he was a popular lecturer, the iron maxim "error has no right to exist . . . guarded him from slipshod or faulty utterance."<sup>82</sup>

In reverence for what he perceived as Catholic tradition, Mazzella set the commanding example. "A big man, physically and intellectually," the lordly Neapolitan "looked like a tower of orthodoxy," Dooley said, "always following in the footsteps of approved leaders." Although his publications flew off the shelf as fast as they were printed, Mazzella's writing was largely derivative, as was the work of other faculty Neo-Thomists.<sup>83</sup> The dean

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*Mazzella's scholarship centered on the argument that "there is one true religion which all men are held to confess and embrace."*

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summed up his approach to theology in his Latin textbook, *Prælectiones de scholastico-dogmaticæ de virtutibus*, a scholastic survey of Christian virtues that was published at Woodstock in 1871. The aim of his exposition was *nova non docere* (to teach nothing new).<sup>84</sup>

Mazzella's theological reading of the contemporary world was disclosed in another volume, entitled *De religione et Ecclesia* (Religion

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<sup>81</sup> McCool, *Catholic Theology*, 238; "Father Aloysius Sabetti; An Autobiography with Reminiscences of His Former Pupils," WL 29 (1900): 216, 227.

<sup>82</sup> Dooley, *Woodstock and Its Makers*, 140 f.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 29; "Cardinal Mazzella," WL 15 (1866): 289 f.

<sup>84</sup> Camillo Mazzella, *Prælectiones scholastico-dogmaticæ de virtutibus infusis in genere et de virtutibus theologicis in specie, quas in Seminario Soc. Jesu ad Woodstock habuit [Mazzella] an. 1870-71* (Woodstock: Woodstock College Press, 1870), i; John L. Morrison, "A History of American Catholic Opinion on the Theory of Evolution, 1859-1950," (Ph.D. diss., presented at the University of Missouri, 1951), 92 f.



and the Church). Reprinted in at least five editions, the last of which was published in Rome, this thick tome found ready reception in seminaries in Europe and the United States. According to Ciani, Mazzella's scholarship centered on the argument that "there is one true religion which all men are held to confess and embrace." This assertion was news to seminarians reared on the American principles of religious liberty and tolerance. He wrote: "Not only individuals, but society itself, must profess the true religion. Therefore, civil society itself must embrace religion revealed by God and must be subjected by means of infallible authority in these areas in those things which pertain to religion."<sup>85</sup> Giving only grudging acceptance to American practice, Mazzella differed with liberal bishops, who maintained that religious liberty and separation of church and state, as practiced in the United States, were the ideal environment for the Catholic Church.

He also collided with Jesuits educated in the pre-Woodstock era. "Both as patriots and as Christians," the Georgetown president, Bernard A. Maguire, said in a 1870 commencement, "we should feel it our duty to oppose the establishment on the soil of our common country of a State religion, were it our own or any other." The principles of religious liberty and the independence of church and state, "we affirm and maintain, and shall ever affirm and maintain." Liberal opinions of this type were anathema to conservative spokesmen such as Mazzella and Brandi.<sup>86</sup>

### III. A New Generation of Jesuits

**W**hy did Americans unquestioningly accept a theology that contradicted principles upon which they had been raised and which darkly critiqued their own culture? The young age of the seminarians (most were in their late teens or twenties) was certainly a factor, but social forces were also at work. The

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<sup>85</sup> Camillo Mazzella, *De religione et ecclesia: Prælectiones scholastico-dogmaticæ quas in collegio SS. Cordis ad Woodstock habuit [Mazzella] ann. 1875-6* (Woodstock: Woodstock College Press, 1876), in Ciani, "Across a Wide Ocean," 90-93.

<sup>86</sup> Maguire in John Gilmary Shea, *Memorial of the First Centenary of Georgetown College, D.C., Comprising a History of Georgetown University by John Gilmary Shea, LL.D., and an Account of the Centennial Celebration by a Member of the Faculty* (Washington, D.C.: P. F. Collier, 1891), 231.

separatist mentality that increasingly characterized the Catholic Church of immigrant America fostered an outlook that led students to glory in the uniqueness of their religion and its transnational institutions. An attractive feature of the Woodstock system was "its solid logic, its clever argumentation and its consistent, universal and eternal character," according to one appraisal. Rather than dispute with Protestants in the old controversialist mode, Woodstock's theologians proclaimed unabashedly not only that Catholics were different, but that they were intellectually and spiritually superior to their opponents.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, to members of a Church frequently subject to public ridicule, the recovery of Catholicism's intellectual tradition was a welcome antidote. Equally appealing was the knowledge that teachings promulgated at Woodstock reflected the centralizing of Catholic seminary education worldwide. The scholasticate gloried in constant reminders that it was part of an exciting global phenomenon—from the news reports that arrived daily from every corner of the Catholic

world for publication in the *Woodstock Letters*, to the accolades bestowed upon the faculty from the highest authorities in the Church. In the classrooms of Woodstock, eminent professors imparted to American priests-to-be "a theology of universal and unchanging significance which did not make exceptions for one country or another, but held a general rule for the whole world."<sup>88</sup>

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*Graduates who recorded recollections of the seminary during its founding era viewed the experience with intense pride. The near-celebrity status of their European mentors contributed to the conviction that those seminary days were a privileged time.*

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In addition, the first generation of Woodstock students saw themselves as actors in a historic

drama that placed them on center stage of the Society's worldwide enterprise. Graduates who recorded recollections of the seminary during its founding era viewed the experience with intense pride. The near-celebrity status of their European mentors contributed to the conviction that those seminary days were a privileged time. That

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<sup>87</sup> Ciani, "Across a Wide Ocean," 108 f.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.



belief was fortified by the scholasticate's sequestered environment, which precluded the possibility of comparing Woodstock with anything outside the Catholic intellectual ghetto. Consequently, while Jesuits lamented the *rustico* isolation of the college, they did not decry its theology.

### *Ritorno in patria*

Although Woodstock was forever molded by its founding faculty, most of the Italians departed when new opportunities arose. After winning international repute by his promotion of Scholasticism, Mazzella was recalled to Rome to teach in 1878. Named a cardinal by Pope Leo XIII eight years later, he continued to influence American Catholicism through his high office in the Roman Curia that supervised seminary education worldwide. After Mazzella was promoted to the cardinalate, Woodstock's Emilio De Augustinis succeeded him as professor at the Roman College. Another papal summons repatriated Salvatore Brandi to Rome in 1891. After sixteen years in America, he became a writer for *Civiltà cattolica* and advisor to the Vatican on American affairs. Other Neapolitan professors—Pantarella, Schiffini, and Degni—became missionaries in New Mexico. By 1884 six of Woodstock's founding faculty had left Maryland, and with their leave-taking, Neapolitan domination dwindled.

There was no campaign to replace the departing Neapolitans. The theologian Carlo Piccirillo, a Roman, claimed that their "harshness and severity" had so alienated American students that there was no desire to import surrogates. But there were other reasons why Neapolitan influence faded, the chief being that the Naples Province had diverted most of its personnel to its Southwestern mission. Moreover, Woodstock's leaden reliance on foreigners had become an embarrassment. "It does not look well for our Society in America to be depending so much and so long on Europe for professors," observed Nicola Congiato, the Piedmontese superior of the California Mission. Anticipating a sentiment voiced in Africa and Asia in the twentieth century, Congiato declared, "The Society is no longer in its infancy here," and therefore native teachers should begin supplanting the Europeans.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Piccirillo (Woodstock) to Canger, Mar. 11, 1884, ANPSJ; Congiato (San Jose) to Robert Fulton, Nov. 28, 1886, Marylandia 1010-XXV-17, ARSI. Mazzella cautioned



Substitutes for the Neapolitans were not easily found—in part because they had not aligned others to take their place. According to Piccirillo, Woodstock's founders had "formed a deeply rooted opinion" that no Americans should be allowed to teach at the seminary, especially in theology.<sup>90</sup> Conversely, native Jesuits, repelled by the scholasticate's woeful isolation, bucked at assignment there, and as a consequence, years passed before American professors eclipsed

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the foreigners. It was not until 1904, thirty-five years after Woodstock's founding, that all of its nineteen faculty save one belonged to the Maryland-New York Province. In the interval, a more cosmopolitan staff began to form with the arrival of Jesuits from Germany, Switzerland, France, and Ireland. These outsiders were more acceptable to the student body than the Neapolitans had

been. The German theologian, Friderick Brambring, who arrived in 1883, for example, was welcomed not only for his erudition, but because his generous treatment of scholarly adversaries was more palatable to Americans than had been the disdainful dismissals of Mazzella and De Augustinis. "Logic and sound principle, not sneers," a student recorded, "was his mode of refutation."<sup>91</sup>

Despite shifts in faculty, the scholasticate did not abandon its program of standardization. Widely acclaimed as the academic flagship of the Society of Jesus in America, Woodstock championed the Neo-Scholastic tradition and Roman-style training, and because of this, drew a large student body. By 1886 the College enrolled 168

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Italian officials not to promote or "to publicize what our Neapolitan Jesuits have done in this province" because "what would cause satisfaction in Naples would cause dissatisfaction here." See Mazzella (Philadelphia) to Palomba, Apr. 12, 1876, ANPSJ.

<sup>90</sup> Piccirillo (Woodstock) to Canger, Apr. 4, 1887, ANPSJ, in Ciani, "Across a Wide Ocean," 65. That Americans were ostracized from teaching was confirmed by the Maryland provincial. It has been the policy that "we would have no American professors in Woodstock," wrote Robert Fulton, "unless we were compelled to get them by the withdrawal of the European professors." See Fulton (Baltimore) to Anderledy, Mar. 11, 1886, Marylandia 1010-IV-10, ARSI.

<sup>91</sup> Dooley, *Woodstock and Its Makers*, 152; [Ryan], "Woodstock College," 2, AGU.

Jesuit philosophers and theologians. At the time of its thirty-fifth anniversary, 552 alumni had been ordained priests, disseminating across America the theology they had learned at Woodstock. Luigi Sabetti boasted that his class in moral theology enrolling 67 seminarians constituted the largest congregation of Jesuit students in the world.<sup>92</sup>

Admired for its faithful implementation of Roman ecclesiastical policy, Woodstock emerged by the 1890s as the intellectual center of American Catholic ultramontaniam. The faculty were internationally renowned, evidenced by the Roman appointments of its professors, by the wide circulation of their textbooks, and by the frequency with which its experts were consulted by scholars and the episcopal hierarchy. When the bishops of the United States met in Baltimore in plenary council in 1884, Antonio Sabetti rejoiced that four of the seven Jesuits invited as theological advisors came from Woodstock. What a "spectacle and embarrassment for old Europe," he gloated.<sup>93</sup>

American Jesuits acknowledged the benefits they had derived from Woodstock's founders. "Maryland owes its life to Naples," a grateful Joseph Keller, the Maryland provincial, declared in 1872. "God alone can repay the province of Naples for all that it has done for Maryland. Without Naples we would still be doing our ABC's." European mentors had generated Americans who were better educated and more deeply schooled in the traditions of the Society than ever before. From the ranks of Woodstock alumni came the next generation of leaders in the United States.<sup>94</sup> The seminary's trickle-down influence was not limited to religion, for its elevated academic status set the standard in a variety of non-theological subjects. "What course of mathematics [is] fol-

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<sup>92</sup> [Ryan], "Woodstock," 3, AGU; Sabetti (Woodstock) to Anderledy, Oct. 14, 1884, Marylandia 1010-XXV-12, ARSI.

<sup>93</sup> Curran, *American Jesuit Spirituality*, 35; Sabetti (Woodstock) to Vioni, Dec. 14, 1884, ANPSJ.

<sup>94</sup> Keller (Baltimore) to Palomba, Aug. 3, 1872, and Sept. 20, 1872, ANPSJ. On American Jesuit observance of the rules, see also Fulton (New York) to Anderledy, June 1, 1884, Marylandia 1010-IV-3, ARSI.



lowed at Woodstock?" a teacher in Maryland asked in 1883. "I shall have to get some new books in algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. . . . [and] it would be better for me to procure the same as you use at Woodstock."<sup>95</sup>

## The Legacy

In assessing the institution's significance, there was much to applaud. When an early chronicler claimed that there was "no more decisive turning point in the story of Jesuit development in America" than the opening of Woodstock, he was not far from the truth.<sup>96</sup> The seminary's European faculty transformed the way theology was taught to Americans. Indeed, Bishop John Lancaster Spaulding of Peoria, a leading advocate of higher intellectual standards for priests in training, declared in 1881 that Woodstock alone among American seminaries provided young clerics with the "best intellectual culture." What they learned was a vast improvement over the indiscriminate schooling of the previous era when seminaries were moored to college campuses. By upgrading the caliber of instruction, Woodstock professionalized the clergy, thereby launching a tradition of theological reflection and scholarship that endured for over a century. Moreover, with the passing of time, improvements in pedagogy emerged. "By the 1930s and 1940s," one study notes, when "some of the strange edges of the system had been rounded off," Woodstock was praised for producing "the clerical elite of Catholicism." From its classrooms there emerged several of the most influential theologians of the twentieth-century American Church, including John Courtney Murray and Gustave Weigel, whose views guided the Second Vatican Council.<sup>97</sup>

But Woodstock's early impress was not entirely benign. It did not benefit the colleges that had opposed its creation. President Bernard A. Maguire complained that Georgetown "suffered for some

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<sup>95</sup> A. T. Tisdall (Frederick, Maryland) to Piccirillo, Feb. 22, 1883, Piccirillo Papers, WCA.

<sup>96</sup> Garraghan, *Jesuits*, 1:645.

<sup>97</sup> Spaulding cited in Michael V. Gannon, "Before and after Modernism," in *The Catholic Priest in the United States*, 321, 362. See also Peter McDonough, *Men Astutely Trained: A History of the Jesuits in the American Century* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 153–56; McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 107, 154 f.



time" after the scholasticate took flight, because the college was obliged to hire lay teachers and prefects to replace the departing Jesuits. Thirty years later, President Joseph Havens Richards bitterly condemned Woodstock's creation as "a grave error of policy." "Professors and students were transported to a semi-wilderness, remote from libraries, from contact with the learned world, and from all those stimulating influences which affect intellectual life in large centres of population and culture." Stripped of its best faculty, Georgetown failed to become a major theological base. Competing with nearby Catholic University, founded in 1889 as a graduate school of theology, Georgetown's program was whittled down, Richards lamented, "to a place of inferiority by the fact of the division of our resources."<sup>98</sup>

As Richards intimated, the seminary's segregation bore fruit its founders never foresaw. Although seclusion liberated seminarians from the distractions of a college campus, it also posed serious drawbacks. In the pre-Woodstock era, the education of priests had taken place in close proximity to the communities that they eventually served. Disregarding lofty questions of speculative theology, training had centered almost exclusively on meeting the Protestant challenge and on grappling with the practical religious and moral issues of the day. The Neo-Scholastic system inaugurated at Woodstock was more academically rigorous. But its excessively speculative orientation meant that important areas of theological inquiry—Scripture, history, and patristics—were neglected. And by shielding students from engagement with the outside environment, the scholasticate thwarted their understanding of the very society to which they were being sent.

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Woodstock's physical seclusion mirrored and abetted its intellectual isolation. Its European-born faculty, reared from an early age in a clerical subculture and victims of revolution, regarded the non-Catholic world as error-ridden and rife with threat. As an upshot of their self-imposed estrangement, they lived as if in a

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<sup>98</sup> Maguire, "Notes," AGU; Richards, "An Explanation," WL 26 (1897): 149, 153.

bubble, perilously ignorant of modern philosophy, science, and culture. Guided by the increasingly centralizing power of Rome, Catholic seminary education in the United States was marred by an unwillingness to reflect positively on secular culture and on the American Catholic experience. Shackled to a blinkered interpretation of the Thomistic tradition, it suffered, in the words of one historian, from "the virtually complete absence of any attempt to venture beyond the approved interpretations of the standard authors." As a consequence, Woodstock College, like most late-nineteenth-century Catholic seminaries in the United States and Europe, spawned a static system of instruction, "frozen in a mold that was universally believed to have been fixed at the Council of Trent."<sup>99</sup>

Woodstock's intellectual disengagement from the world, which paralleled the isolation of the Church itself on a global scale, thus had long-run import for Catholic theology. As the scholar Gerald A. McCool has observed, Catholic philosophers' and theologians' disdain for modernity prevented the Church from dealing effectively with the challenges posed by modern exegesis and historical method when these were applied to theological questions. As a result, they could not appreciate "the genuine questions with which modern historical science and modern philosophy confronted the church at the time of the modernist crisis." Thus, for all the benefits it brought to American Catholicism, the institution's heritage was for many years mixed.<sup>100</sup>

### Broadening the Base

Woodstock's hand reached across the continent. Piedmontese Jesuits in the Far West, lacking cash and personnel to open good institutions of their own, looked instead to Maryland to train their scholastics. Thus, the cautious and critical mentality that shaped theological training in the East was extended westward. Woodstock provided more than academic and spiritual preparation to frontier clergy, however. Jesuits destined for the Rocky Mountain Mission also received their instruction in practical skills that aided their work among Native Americans. As soon as Alessandro Diomedi made footfall in the United States in 1874, for example, he rushed to

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<sup>99</sup> Ellis, "Formation," *The Catholic Priest*, 28, 32 f., 40–44.

<sup>100</sup> McCool, *Catholic Theology*, 239 f.



Woodstock to master the printer's trade before cantering off to the Indian missions. Thus prepared, he founded the St. Ignatius Mission Press in Montana, which published scores of dictionaries and grammars of native languages. Giuseppe Marra, future editor of *La revista católica*, the Jesuits' Spanish-language newspaper of the Southwest, likewise learned the publisher's art at Woodstock.

The seminary's imprint on frontier life did not end with the ordination of its graduates. Once they had emigrated west, missionary priests found the *Woodstock Letters* an effective instrument for publicizing their work and for winning fresh recruits for Oregon, Alaska, California, and New Mexico. And just as Georgetown College stood as an early exemplar of American education for expatriate Jesuits in the West, so too Woodstock became a fixed reference in matters philosophical and theological. Accordingly, when missionaries later opened their own houses of study in the California and Rocky Mountain Missions, Maryland's seminary provided the textbooks, manuals, and curricular prototype.

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The bond between Woodstock College and New Mexico was particularly close. Not only did the seminary render a "continual subsidy" to Jesuit operations in the West, as one professor recounted, it also supplied personnel. Even building design was transferred from East to West. When Domenico Pantanella founded Sacred Heart College in Denver, Woodstock served as a template in both its architecture and its curriculum. As the *Woodstock Letters* proudly reported, students of philosophy in Colorado "follow the same order of exercises as Woodstock, and use Schiffini as their textbook." From Maryland, Neapolitan seminary professors also supervised operations in New Mexico, advising superiors in both Albuquerque and Naples how best to govern that challenging mission. Camillo Mazzella was twice sent west as official visitor to unravel crises in the governance of the Southwest.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Sabetti (Woodstock) to Vioni, Sept. 13, 1882, ANPSJ; WL 25 (1896): 332.



The ideal of a sequestered seminary, established first in Maryland, was replicated by Jesuits across the United States. As missionaries advanced westward, penury compelled them to return temporarily to the old practice of locating scholasticates on a college campus. But the detached Woodstock model eventually caught up with them and they warmly embraced it. The Piedmontese in California, for example, had for over thirty years trained their Jesuits-to-be at Santa Clara College. Once the number of applicants became sufficiently large, however, the seminary was relocated in 1888 from the "the hubbub of a boarding school" to a bucolic site near the village of Los Gatos, California. On an unpeopled hillside amid vineyards and olive groves, Jesuit trainees lived in splendid solitude, cocooned in a protected subculture—just like their confreres at Woodstock College. "There we will be in wilderness," wrote a credulous seminarian, "a long way from other dwellings [in] a real earthly paradise."<sup>102</sup> The tradition of a closed seminary, isolated from worldly distractions, would remain the Jesuit standard until 1966, when the Thirty-first General Congregation mandated that novices "should have sufficient social contact with their contemporaries." Novitiates, the congregation declared, should "be located in a place where the novices' probation can be conducted according to the manner of life proper to the Society."<sup>103</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

**D**oes the story of the Italian immigrants in Maryland help us reflect on the contemporary Society of Jesus? It certainly reminds us that the narrative of Jesuit history is not confined to the epoch of St. Ignatius and the first companions. The saga of the Italian expatriates of Maryland suggests that balance is needed in chronicling the order's historic evolution. Most of us know little about the nineteenth-century Society. Since the 1960s, researchers have focused the lens of their research on the organization's six-

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<sup>102</sup> Ciravegna (Monaco) to Beckx, Apr. 18, 1870, Taur. 1010-III-11, ARSI; Weckx (Santa Clara) to Mola, June 1888, ANPSJ.

<sup>103</sup> *Documents of the Thirty-first General Congregation* (Woodstock: Woodstock College, 1967), 23.

teenth-century origins, a consequence of the impetus given by Vatican II to the rediscovery of the sources of religious life. While this emphasis has resulted in many groundbreaking studies, it has also created the impression that this era stood as an archetype for all subsequent Jesuit history. But as John W. O'Malley, author of *The First Jesuits*, has cautioned, the Society of Jesus is best understood by looking beyond its founding moment and early documents. We cannot presume that "the ship sails through the sea of history without being touched by it." We must grasp how the organization existed and changed in different historical periods if we are to truly understand the institution we have inherited.<sup>104</sup> For the nineteenth century, that lacuna remains especially stark.

The story of the emigration of Italian Jesuits to nineteenth-century Maryland describes a small portion of that history. What does it tell us? For one thing, it reveals that immigration, multiculturalism, and ethnic diversity are not solely contemporary phenomena. Indeed, they have been defining experiences of the American Society since its beginning. The order is what it is today, in part, because of the European refugees who sustained its membership at a critical time. Their coming transformed the Society's isolated American branch from an organization dominated by local conventions into a more diverse and global body integrated into the wider life of the Church and the Society at large. What historians have said of the impetus given to Georgetown College by the emigration of Jesuits from abroad can be applied to the American Society as a whole: their influence "can scarcely be over stressed."<sup>105</sup> Considering the central role that displacement has played in their own history, it

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*Considering the central role that displacement has played in their own history, it is fitting that Jesuits of our time desire to do what they can to aid refugees and displaced persons in today's world.*

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<sup>104</sup> John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993); id., "How the Jesuits Changed: 1540–56," *America*, July 27, 1991, 32.

<sup>105</sup> Durkin, *Georgetown University*, 27.



is fitting that Jesuits of our time desire to do what they can to aid refugees and displaced persons in today's world.<sup>106</sup>

The refugee story also invites the contemporary Society to a fuller understanding of its mission and charism. The interaction of Italian and American traditions in nineteenth-century Maryland confirms an observation of a recent Jesuit general congregation: "As an international apostolic body, the Society is uniquely able to draw upon a range of cultural experience in its ministries" that enriches intercultural dialogue. But the congregation also recognizes that Jesuit evangelizers in the past have not always succeeded in inserting themselves "into the heart of a culture, but instead have remained a foreign presence."<sup>107</sup> The implementation of the Jesuit charism of adapting all things to "the circumstances of persons, times, and places" has never been easy.<sup>108</sup> Jesuits of the nineteenth century struggled just as intensely to maintain unity of hearts and minds as do their modern successors who cope with diverging cultural sensibilities and age differences. The mixing of cultures inevitably provokes tension and challenge as religious from diverse backgrounds struggle to find common ground amid disparate views of what is essential to Jesuit life and ministry. While the term "inculturation" may be a recent addition to the Jesuit vocabulary, the task of accommodating the Gospel to varied cultures is as complex as it is perennial.

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<sup>106</sup> See "Our Mission and Justice," *Documents of the Thirty-fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), 45.

<sup>107</sup> "Our Mission and Culture," *ibid.*, 65, 55.

<sup>108</sup> *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), no. 343<sup>v.9</sup> (p. 144); George E. Gann, *Saint Ignatius' Idea of a Jesuit University* (Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 1956), 79 f.



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